Robert Browning's Poems

Marguerite Berkey.

Selections from the

Poetical Works

of

Robert Browning

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Selections from the

Poetical Works

of

Robert Browning

DEDICATED TO

ALFRED TENNYSON

IN POETRY—ILLUSTRIOUS AND CONSUMMATE

IN FRIENDSHIP—NOBLE AND SINCERE

DEDICATED TO

ALFRED TENNYSON

IN POETRY—PLAYFULNESS AND COMMONSENSE

IN EXPOSITION—NOBLE AND ENDEARING

In the present selection from my poetry, there is an attempt to escape from the embarrassment of appearing to pronounce upon what myself may consider the best of it. I adopt another principle; and by simply stringing together certain pieces on the thread of an imaginary personality, I present them in succession, rather as the natural development of a particular experience than because I account them the most noteworthy portion of my work. Such an attempt was made in the volume of selections from the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning: to which —in outward uniformity, at least—my own would venture to become a companion.

A few years ago, had such an opportunity presented itself, I might have been tempted to say a word in reply to the objections my poetry was used to encounter. Time has kindly co-operated with my disinclination to write the poetry and the criticism besides. The readers I am at last privileged to expect, meet me fully half-way; and if, from the fitting standpoint, they must still "censure me in their wisdom," they have previously "awakened their senses that they may the better judge." Nor do I apprehend any more charges of being wilfully obscure, unconscientiously careless, or perversely harsh. Having hitherto done my utmost in the art to which my life is a devotion, I cannot engage to increase the effort; but I conceive that there may be helpful light, as well as re-assuring warmth, in the attention and sympathy I gratefully acknowledge.

R. B.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
My Star	9
A Face	10
My Last Duchess	11
Song from "Pippa Passes"	13
Cristina	14
Count Gismond	17
Eurydice to Orpheus	22
The Glove	22
Song	29
A Serenade at the Villa	30
Youth and Art	33
The Flight of the Duchess	36
Song from "Pippa Passes"	72
"How they Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix"	73
Song from "Paracelsus"	77
Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr	78
Incident of the French Camp	79
The Lost Leader	81
In a Gondola	83
A Lovers' Quarrel	92
Earth's Immortalities	98
The Last Ride Together	99
Mesmerism	104
By the Fireside	109
Any Wife to Any Husband	121
In a Year	128
Song from "James Lee"	131
A Woman's Last Word	131
Meeting at Night	133
Parting at Morning	134
Women and Roses	134

PAGE

Misconceptions 136
A Pretty Woman 137
A Light Woman 140
Love in a Life 142
Life in a Love 144
The Laboratory 145
Gold Hair 147
The Statue and the Bust 154
Love Among the Ruins 165
Time's Revenges 169
Waring 171
Home Thoughts from Abroad 180
The Italian in England 181
The Englishman in Italy 186
Up at a Villa—Down in the City 196
Pictor Ignotus 200
Fra Lippo Lippi 204
Andrea del Sarto 221
The Bishop Orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church 232
A Toccata of Galuppi's 237
How it Strikes a Contemporary 241
Protus 246
Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha 249
Abt Vogler 256
Two in the Campagna 263
"De Gustibus—" 265
The Guardian-Angel 266
Evelyn Hope 270
Memorabilia 272
Apparent Failure 273
Prospice 277
"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" 277
A Grammarian's Funeral 289
Cleon 295
Instans Tyrannus 309
An Epistle 312
Caliban upon Setebos 324
Saul 338
Rabbi Ben Ezra 359
Epilogue 368

MY STAR.

All that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

A FACE.

If one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!
No shade encroaching on the matchless mould

Of those two lips, which should be opening soft
In the pure profile ; not as when she laughs,
For that spoils all : but rather as if aloft
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's
Burthen of honey-coloured buds, to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.
Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
How it should waver, on the pale gold ground,
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts!
I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts
Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb :
But these are only massed there, I should think,
Waiting to see some wonder momently
Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky,
(That 's the pale ground you 'd see this sweet face by)
All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
With fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

MY LAST DUCHESS.

FERRARA.

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design: for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
"Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
"Must never hope to reproduce the faint
"Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough

For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 't was all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who 'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
"Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
"Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,

Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We 'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we 'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me?

SONG FROM "PIPPA PASSES."

I

Give her but a least excuse to love me
When—where—
How—can this arm establish her above me,
If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to eternally reprove me?
("Hist!"—said Kate the queen;
But "Oh," cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
"'T is only a page that carols unseen,
"Crumbling your hounds their messes!")

II

Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honour,
My heart!
Is she poor?—What costs it to become a donour?
Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.
But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!
("Nay, list!"—bade Kate the queen;
And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
"'T is only a page that carols unseen
"Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

CRISTINA.

I

She should never have looked at me if she meant I should not love her!
There are plenty . . men, you call such, I suppose . . she may discover
All her soul too, if she pleases, and yet leave much as she found them:
But I'm not so, and she knew it when she fixed me, glancing round them.

II

What? To fix me thus meant nothing? But I can't tell (there 's my weakness)
What her look said!—no vile cant, sure, about "need to strew the bleakness

"Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
that the sea feels"—no "strange yearning
"That such souls have, most to lavish where
there's chance of least returning."

III

Oh, we've sunk enough here, God knows!
but not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us, when the
spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones, and
apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way, to its
triumph or undoing.

IV

There are flashes stuck from midnights,
there are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish, whereby
swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse, which
for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time that away
the rest have trifled.

V

Doubt you if, in some such moment, as she
fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed, here an age 't is
resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages: while the
true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way, with some
other soul to mingle?

VI

Else it loses what it lived for, and eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect, deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-bliss have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me, mine and her souls rushed together?

VII

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment, the world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever. Never fear but there 's provision
Of the devil's to quench knowledge, lest we walk the earth in rapture!
—Making those who catch God's secret, just so much more prize their capture!

VIII.

Such am I: the secret's mine now! She has lost me, I have gained her;
Her soul 's mine: and thus, grown perfect, I shall pass my life's remainder.
Life will just hold out the proving both our powers, alone and blended:
And then, come next life quickly! This world's use will have been ended.

COUNT GISMOND.

AIX IN PROVENCE.

I

CHRIST God who savest man, save most
Of men Count Gismond who saved me!
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
Chose time and place and company
To suit it; when he struck at length
My honour, 't was with all his strength.

II

And doubtlessly, ere he could draw
All points to one, he must have schemed!
That miserable morning saw
Few half so happy as I seemed,
While being dressed in queen's array
To give our tourney prize away.

III

I thought they loved me, did me grace
To please themselves; 't was all their deed
God makes, or fair or foul, our face;
If showing mine so caused to bleed
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

IV.

They, too, so beauteous! Each a queen
By virtue of her brow and breast;
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,

Had either of them spoke, instead
Of glancing sideways with still head!

But no: they let me laugh, and sing
My birthday song quite through, adjust
The last rose in my garland, fling
A last look on the mirror, trust
My arms to each an arm of theirs,
And so descend the castle-stairs—

VI

And come out on the morning troop
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,
And called me queen, and made me stoop
Under the canopy—(a streak
That pierced it, of the outside sun,
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun)—

VII

And they could let me take my state
And foolish throne amid applause
Of all come there to celebrate
My queen's-day—Oh I think the cause
Of much was, they forgot no crowd
Makes up for parents in their shroud!

VIII

However that be, all eyes were bent
Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down, 't was time I should present
The victor's crown, but . . . there, 't will last

No long time . . . the old mist again
Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

IX

See! Gismond 's at the gate, in talk
With his two boys: I can proceed.
Well, at that moment, who should stalk
Forth boldly—to my face, indeed—
But Gauthier? and he thundered "Stay!"
And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!

X

"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet
"About her! Let her shun the chaste,
"Or lay herself before their feet!
"Shall she, whose body I embraced
"A night long, queen it in the day?
"For honour's sake no crowns, I say!"

XI

I? What I answered? As I live,
I never fancied such a thing
As answer possible to give.
What says the body when they spring
Some monstrous torture-engine's whole
Strength on it? No more says the soul.

XII

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew
That I was saved. I never met
His face before, but, at first view,
I felt quite sure that God had set
Himself to Satan: who would spend
A minute's mistrust on the end?

XIII

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat
Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth
With one back-handed blow that wrote
In blood men's verdict there. North, South,
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
And damned, and truth stood up instead.

XIV

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
The heart o' the joy, with my content
In watching Gismond unalloyed
By any doubt of the event:
God took that on him—I was bid
Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

XV

Did I not watch him while he let
His armourer just brace his greaves,
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
The while! His foot . . . my memory leaves
No least stamp out, nor how anon
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

XVI

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
Was finished, prone lay the false knight
Prone as his lie, upon the ground:
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
And said, "Here die, but end thy breath
"In full confession, lest thou fleet
"From my first, to God's second death!
"Say, hast thou lied?" And, "I have lied
"To God and her," he said, and died.

XVIII

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
—What safe my heart holds, though no word
Could I repeat now, if I tasked
My powers for ever, to a third
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
Until I sank upon his breast.

XIX

Over my head his arm he flung
Against the world; and scarce I felt
His sword (that dripped by me and swung)
A little shifted in its belt:
For he began to say the while
How South our home lay many a mile.

XX

So, 'mid the shouting multitude
We two walked forth to never more
Return. My cousins have pursued
Their life, untroubled as before
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
God lighten! May his soul find grace!

XXI

Our elder boy has got the clear
Great brow; tho' when his brother's black
Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here?
And have you brought my tercel back?
I was just telling Adela
How many birds it struck since May.

EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS.

A PICTURE BY FREDERICK LEIGHTON, R. A.

But give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow!
Let them once more absorb me! One look now
Will lap me round forever, not to pass
Out of its light, though darkness lie beyond:
Hold me but safe again within the bond
Of one immortal look! All woe that was,
Forgotten, and all terror that may be,
Defied,—no past is mine, no future: look at me!

THE GLOVE.

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur.*)

"Heigho," yawned one day King Francis,
"Distance all value enhances!
"When a man's busy, why, leisure
"Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:

"'Faith, and at leisure once is he?
"Straightway he wants to be busy.
"Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm
"Caught thinking war the true pastime.
"Is there a reason in metre?
"Give us your speech, master Peter!"
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
"Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets:
"Men are the merest Ixions"—
Here the King whistled aloud, "Let's
". . . Heigho . . . go look at our lions!"
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading,
Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir de Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost
With the dame he professed to adore most—
Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,
And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.

They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled: one's heart beating redoubled;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;
Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion.

Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot
(Whose experience of nature 's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu.
One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded
His platform, and us who surrounded
The barrier, they reached and they rested
On space that might stand him in best stead:
For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
The lion at last was delivered?
Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,

By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike crouched hard by the fountain
To waylay the date-gathering negress:
So guarded he entrance or egress.
"How he stands!" quoth the King: "we
may well swear,
("No novice, we 've won our spurs elsewhere
"And so can afford the confession,)
"We exercise wholesome discretion
"In keeping aloof from his threshold;
"Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh
hold,
"Their first would too pleasantly purloin
"The visitor's brisket or sirloin:
"But who 's he would prove so foolhardy?
"Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
Fell close to the lion, and rested:
The dame 't was, who flung it and jested
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
For months past; he sat there pursuing
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight 's a tarrier!
De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion
Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on

The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,
And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
Leaped back where the lady was seated
And full in the face of its owner
Flung the glove.

"Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?
"So should I!"—cried the King—"'t was mere vanity,
"Not love, set that task to humanity!"
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful,—
As if she had tried, in a crucible,
To what "speeches like gold" were reducible,
And, finding the finest proof copper,
Felt smoke in her face was but proper;
To know what she had *not* to trust to,
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?
If she wished not the rash deed's recalment?
"For I"—so I spoke—"am a poet:
"Human nature—behoves that I know it!"

She told me, "Too long had I heard
"Of the deed proved alone by the word:
"For my love—what De Lorge would not dare!
"With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare!
"And the endless descriptions of death
"He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
"I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
"Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,
"For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
"Must offer my love in return.
"When I looked on your lion, it brought
"All the dangers at once to my thought,
"Encountered by all sorts of men,
"Before he was lodged in his den,—
"From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
"Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
"With no King and no Court to applaud,
"By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
"Yet to capture the creature made shift,
"That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
"—To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
"Of the pit, on no greater pretence
"Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
"Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
"So, wiser I judged it to make
"One trial what 'death for my sake'
"Really meant, while the power was yet mine
"Than to wait until time should define

"Such a phrase not so simply as I,
"Who took it to mean just 'to die.'
"The blow a glove gives is but weak:
"Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?
"But when the heart suffers a blow,
"Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway.
No doubt that a noble should more weigh
His life than befits a plebeian;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
—He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn
If you whispered, "Friend, what you'd get, first earn!"
And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married,
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared auger.
For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;
And, in short, stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won. . . how do you call her?
The beauty, that rose in the sequel
To the King's love, who loved her a week well.

And 't was noticed he never would honour
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service, and fetching
His wife, from her chamber, those straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
While the King took the closet to chat in,—
But of course this adventure came pat in.
And never the King told the story,
How bringing a glove brought such glory,
But the wife smiled,—"His nerves are grown firmer:
"Mine he brings now and utters no murmur."

Venienti occurrite morbo!
With which moral I drop my theorbo.

SONG.

I

Nay but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

II

Because, you spend your lives in praising;
To praise, you search the wide world over;

Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

I

That was I, you heard last night,
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small:
Life was dead, and so was light.

II

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm.
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music; that was I.

III

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof:
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning!—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

V

So wore night; the East was gray,
White the broad-faced hemlock flowers:
There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

VI

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you: "When life gropes
"Feebly for the path where fell
"Light last on the evening slopes,—

VII

"One friend in that path shall be,
"To secure my step from wrong;
"One to count night day for me,
"Patient through the watches long,
"Serving most with none to see."

VIII

Never say—as something bodes—
"So, the worst has yet a worse!
"When life halts 'neath double loads,
"Better the task-master's curse
"Than such music on the roads!

IX

"When no moon succeeds the sun,
"Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
"Any star, the smallest one,
"While some drops, where lightning [illegible]
"Show the final storm begun—

X

"When the fire-fly hides its spot,
"When the garden-voices fail
"In the darkness thick and hot,—
"Shall another voice avail,
"That shape be where these are not?

XI

"Has some plague a longer lease,
"Proffering its help uncouth?
"Can't one even die in peace?
"As one shuts one's eye on youth,
"Is that face the last one sees?"

XII

Oh how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

YOUTH AND ART.

I

It once might have been, once only:
We lodged in a street together,
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

II

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
You thumbed, thrust, patted and polished,
Then laughed "They will see, some day,
"Smith made, and Gibson demolished."

III

My business was song, song, song;
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered;
"Kate Brown 's on the boards ere long,
"And Grisi's existence embittered!"

IV

I earned no more by a warble
Than you by a sketch in plaster;
You wanted a piece of marble,
I needed a music-master.

V

We studied hard in our styles,
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,
For air, looked out on the tiles,
For fun, watched each other's windows.

VI

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard too;
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
With fingers the clay adhered to.

VII

And I—soon managed to find
Weak points in the flower-fence facing,
Was forced to put up a blind
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

VIII

No harm! It was not my fault
If you never turned your eye's tail up
As I shook upon E *in alt.*,
Or ran the chromatic scale up:

IX

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
And the boys and girls gave guesses,
And stalls in our street looked rare
With bulrush and watercresses.

X

Why did not you pinch a flower
In a pellet of clay and fling it?
Why did not I put a power
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

XI

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
(And yet the memory rankles)
When models arrived, some minx
Tripped up stairs, she and her ankles.

XII

But I think I gave you as good!
"That foreign fellow,—who can know
"How she pays, in a playful mood,
"For his tuning her that piano?"

XIII

Could you say so, and never say
"Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
"And I fetch her from over the way,
"Her, piano, and long tunes and short tunes?"

XIV

No, no: you would not be rash,
Nor I rasher and something over;
You 've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

XV

But you meet the Prince at the Board,
I'm queen myself at *bals-parés*,
I 've marred a rich old lord,
And you 're dubbed knight and an R. A.

XVI

Each life 's unfulfilled, you see;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy.

XVII

And nobody calls you a dunce,
And people suppose me clever;
This could but have happened once,
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

I

You 're my friend:
I was the man the Duke spoke to;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too;
So, here 's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend!

II

Ours is a great wild country:
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop;
For when you've passed the corn-field country
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
And sheep-range leads to cattle-track,
And cattle-track to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
O' the mountain where, at a funeral pace,

Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests, up and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branched through and through with many a vein,
Whence iron 's dug, and copper's dealt ;
Look right, look left, look straight before,—
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
—And the whole is our Duke's country.

III

I was born the day this present Duke was—
(And O, says the song, ere I was old !)
In the castle where the other Duke was—
(When I was happy and young, not old !)
I in the kennel, he in the bower :
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was huntsman in that day ;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,
Three times, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he 'd contrive

To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?
And that 's why the old Duke would rather
He lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call;
That 's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they passed
The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,
Just a month after the babe was born.
"And," quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since
"The Duke has got an heir, our Prince
"Needs the Duke's self at his side:"
The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners
Of all achievements after all manners,
And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,
What he called stink, and they, perfume:
—They should have set him on red Berold

Mad with pride, like fire to manage!
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine!
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin!
(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game!
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame!)
Had they broached a cask of white beer from Berlin!
—Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

IV

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who:
And now was the time to revisit her tribe.
Abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

V

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape;

Full of his travel, struck at himself.
You 'd say he despised our bluff old ways?
—Not he! For in Paris they told the elf
That our rough North land was the Land of
Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without
knowing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without
being it;
'T was not for the joy's self, but the joy of
his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self but the pride of our
seeing it,
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of
them torn-out:
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength.
—They should have set him on red Berold
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire!

VI

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we
heard:

And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the lady, in time of spring.
—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling!
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urox or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle.
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
And so we saw the lady arrive:
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger!
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees:
In truth, she was not hard to please!
Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,
Straight at the castle, that 's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls:
As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired—
If that was an eagle she saw hover.
And the green and grey bird on the field was the plover.

When suddenly appeared the Duke :
And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed
On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest smile;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown grey ;
For such things must begin some one day.

VII

In a day or two she was well again ;
As who should say, "You labour in vain !
"This is all a jest against God, who meant
"I should ever be, as I am, content
"And glad in his sight; therefore, glad I will be."
So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII

She was active, stirring, all fire—
Could not rest, could not tire—
To a stone she might have given life !
(I myself loved once, in my day)
—For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)

Never in all the world such an one!
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
To meet his eye with the other trophies,
Now outside the hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule—(but for after-sadness that came)
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the old dame
Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame.
They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to strike him
So found the Duke, and his mother like him:
The lady hardly got a rebuff—
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,
Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin;
And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
And said in his heart, "'T is done to spite me,
"But I shall find in my power to right me!"
Don't swear, friend! The old one, many a year,
Is in hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear.

X

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice,
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
And another and another, and faster and faster,
Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled,—
Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,
He should do the Middle Age no treason
In resolving on a hunting-party.

Always provided, old books showed the way
of it!
What meant old poets by their strictures?
And when old poets had said their say of it,
How taught old painters in their pictures?
We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
And gather up woodcraft's authentic tradi-
tions.
Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated—
To encourage your dog, now, the properest
chirrup,
Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting
your stirrup—,
We of the household took thought and de-
bated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the
jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in,
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"
And "ahs" while he tugged on his grand-
sire's trunk-hose;
What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the
scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crim-
son?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme
on 't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers and Ver-
derers,

Might hope for real hunters at length and
not murderers,
And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time
on 't!

XI

Now you must know that when the first diz-
ziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots
subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The Duke's
part provided,
"Had not the Duchess some share in the
business!"
For out of the mouth of two or three wit-
nesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather,
By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function;
Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
"When horns wind a mort and the deer is
at siege,
"Let the dame of the castle prick forth on
her jennet,
"And with water to wash the hands of her
liege
"In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
"Let her preside at the disemboweling."
Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
And thrust her broad wings like a banner
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon;

And if day by day and week by week
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
Would it cause you any great surprise
If, when you decided to give her an airing,
You found she needed a little preparing?
—I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,
So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—
Was conduct ever more affronting?
With all the ceremony settled—
With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a pieballed
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eyeballed,—
No wonder if the Duke was nettled!

And when she persisted nevertheless,—
Well, I suppose here 's the time to confess
That there ran half round our lady's chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
How could I keep at any vast distance?
And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was decorous and lawful;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct.
Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once!
What meant she?—Who was she?—Her duty and station.
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,

Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
In brief, my friends, set all the devils in hell free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on!
Well, somehow or other it ended at last,
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase—oh such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column!

XII

However, at sunrise our company mustered;
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel;
For the court-yard walls were filled with fog
You might cut as an axe chops a log—
Like so much wool for color and bulkiness;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,

And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen.
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that, from the valley under.
And, looking through the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gipsies on their march,
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

XIII

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside;
North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.
But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned;
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
For the earth—not a use to which they don't turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,

They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;
Or a lock that 's a puzzle of wards within wards ;
Or, if your colt's forefoot inclines to curve inwards,
Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.
Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle ;
But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters ;
Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and potters !
Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters :
Such are the works they put their hand to,
The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.

And these made the troop, which our Duke saw sally
Toward his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our riders.
And up they wound till they reached the ditch,
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait directly and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
The oldest Gipsy then above ground;
And, sure as the autumn season came round,
She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
And every time, as she swore, for the last time.
And presently she was seen to sidle
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
So that the horse of a sudden reared up
As under its nose the old witch peered up
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes
Of no use now but to gather brine,
And began a kind of level whine
Such as they use to sing to their viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding.
And then, as of old, at the end of the humming
Her usual presents were forthcoming

—A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
(Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)
Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end,—
And so she awaited her annual stipend.
But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
A word in reply; and in vain she felt
With twitching fingers at her belt
For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe,—
Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,
She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
No sooner had she named his lady,
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel meaning:
For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning;
If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow;
And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double?
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)

He was contrasting, 't was plain from his
gesture,
The life of the lady so flower-like and deli-
cate
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
From out of the throng : and while I drew
near
He told the crone—as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery—
The main of the lady's history,
Her forwardness and ingratitude ;
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits
tightening,
And her brow with assenting intelligence
brightening,
As though she engaged with hearty goodwill
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the lady a thorough frighten-
ing.
And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the
hernshaw,
He bade me take the Gipsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To while away a weary hour
For the lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what 's to be told you
Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising:
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had forgone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
Come out as after the rain he paces.
Two unmistakable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.

So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry,
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry.
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced, she said, to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the lady spoken.
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden, and there continue
The whole time, sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,
—Jacynth, forgive me the comparison!
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where 's not one tree

When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By—was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber?—and, to be certain,
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep along the floor
With her head against the door;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen—the Gipsy woman late,
With head and face downbent
On the lady's head and face intent:
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The lady sat between her knees,
And o'er them the lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the crone
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil
—Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure, or like bell-clappers.
I said, "Is it blessing, is it banning,
"Do they applaud you or burlesque you—
"Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?"
But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
At once I was stopped by the lady's expression:

For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
—Life's pure fire, received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving,
—Life, that filling her, passed redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white
throat curving;
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened.
When all at once a hand detained me,
The selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme.
Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world.
Word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand;
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gipsy said:—

"And so at last we find my tribe,
"And so I set thee in the midst,
"And to one and all of them describe
"What thou saidst and what thou didst,

"Our long and terrible journey through,
"And all thou art ready to say and do
"In the trials that remain.
"I trace them the vein and the other vein
"That meet on thy brow and part again
"Making our rapid mystic mark;
"And I bid my people prove and probe
"Each eye's profound and glorious globe
"Till they detect the kindred spark
"In those depths so dear and dark,
"Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
"Circling over the midnight sea.
"And on that round young cheek of thine
"I make them recognise the tinge,
"As when of the costly scarlet wine
"They drip so much as will impinge
"And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
"One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
"Over a silver plate whose sheen
"Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
"For so I prove thee, to one and all,
"Fit, when my people ope their breast,
"To see the sign, and hear the call,
"And take the vow, and stand the test
"Which adds one more child to the rest—
"When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
"And the world is left outside.
"For there is probation to decree,
"And many and long must the trials be
"Thou shalt victoriously endure,
"If that brow is true and those eyes are sure.

"Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
"Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb,—
"Let once the vindicating ray
"Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
"And steel and fire have done their part,
"And the prize falls on its finder's heart:
"So, trial after trial past,
"Wilt thou fall at the very last
"Breathless, half in trance
"With the thrill of the great deliverance,
"Into our arms for evermore;
"And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
"About thee, what we knew before,
"How love is the only good in the world.
"Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
"Or brain devise, or hand approve!
"Stand up, look below,
"It is our life at thy feet we throw
"To step with into light and joy;
"Not a power of life but we employ
"To satisfy thy nature's want.
"Art thou the tree that props the plant,
"Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—
"Canst thou help us, must we help thee?
"If any two creatures grew into one,
"They would do more than the world has done;
"Though each apart were never so weak,
"Yet through the world should we vainly seek

"For the sum of knowledge and the might
"Which in such union grew their right:
"So, to approach at least that end,
"And blend,—as much as may be, blend
"Thee with us or us with thee,—
"As climbing plant or propping tree,
"Shall some one deck thee over and down,
"Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?
"Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,
"Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
"Die on thy boughs and disappear
"While not a leaf of thine is sere?
"Or is the other fate in store,
"And art thou fitted to adore,
"To give thy wondrous self away,
"And take a stronger nature's sway?
"I foresee and I could foretell
"Thy future portion, sure and well:
"But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
"Let them say what thou shalt do!
"Only be sure thy daily life,
"In its peace or in its strife,
"Never shall be unobserved;
"We pursue thy whole career,
"And hope for it, or doubt, or fear.
"Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
"We are beside thee in all thy ways,
"With our blame, with our praise,
"Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
"Glad, angry—but indifferent, no!
"Whether it be thy lot to go,

"For the good of us all, where the haters meet,
"In the crowded city's horrible street;
"Or thou step alone through the lone morass
"Where never sound yet was
"Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
"For the air is still, and the water still,
"When the blue breast of the dripping coot
"Dives under, and all is mute.
"So, at the last shall come old age,
"Decrepit as befits that stage;
"How else wouldst thou retire apart
"With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
"And gather all to the very least
"Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
"Let fall through eagerness to find
"The crowning dainties yet behind?
"Ponder on the entire past
"Laid together thus at last,
"When the twilight helps to fuse
"The first fresh with the faded hues,
"And the outline of the whole,
"As round eve's shades their framework roll,
"Grandly fronts for once thy soul!
"And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
"Of yet another morning breaks,
"And like the hand which ends a dream,
"Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
"Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
"Then—"

Ay, then indeed something would happen!

But what? For here her voice changed like
a bird's;
There grew more of the music and less of
the words.
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable
With these clever clerkly fingers,
All I've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
To give you even the poorest version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stam-
mering!
—More fault of those who had the hammer-
ing
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!
But to return from this excursion,—
Just, do you mark, when the song was
sweetest,
The piece most deep and the charm com-
pletest,
There came, shall I say, a snap—
And the charm vanished!
And my sense returned, so strangely ban-
ished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring
made I
Down from the casement, round to the por-
tal,—
Another minute and I had entered,—
When the door opened, and more than mortal

Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess : I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
Bet wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding ;
I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what his friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her ; the crone
Followed silent and alone ;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style ; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits ; her stature shrunk ;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding ;
Crossed the court with nobody heeding ;
All the world was at the chase,
The court-yard like a desert place,
The stable emptied of its small fry.
I saddled myself the very palfrey

I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her,
And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad, for her service,
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
But, unable to pay proper duty where owing it,
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it.
For though, the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused me,—
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,

—Something to the effect that I was in readiness
Whenever God should please she needed me,—
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
With a look, a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom—
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that 's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood,—that a true heart so may gain
Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!
It was a little plait of hair
Such as friends in a convent make
To wear, each for the other's sake,—
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is idle,
These are feelings it is not good to foster,—
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost her.

XVI

When the liquor 's out why clink the cannikin?
I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib
Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
When she heard, what she called the flight of the feloness
—But it seems such child's play,
What they said and did with the lady away!
And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
Always made me—and no doubt makes you —sick
Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
As that sweet form disappeared through the postern,
She that kept it in constant good humour,
It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more.
But the world thought otherwise and went on,
And my head 's one that its spite was spent on:
Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,

The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:
But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery;
So they made no search and small inquiry:
And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a visit, I've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they 're folks the Duke don't want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,
And the old one was in the young one's stead,
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it!
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favour you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse:
In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

XVII

You 're my friend—
What a thing friendship is, world without end!
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
And poured out, all lovelily, sparklingy, sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the druids—
Friendship may match with that monarch of fluids;
Each supples a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-outs,
Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand doubts
Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.
I have seen my little lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before;
I always wanted to make a clean breast of it:
And now it is made—why, my heart's blood, that went trickle,
Trickle, but anon, in such muddy driblets,
Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ventricle,
And genially floats me about the giblets.

I'll tell you what I intend to do :
I must see this fellow his sad life through—
He is our Duke, after all,
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.
My father was born here, and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son with;
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there 's no mine to blow up and get done with :
So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.
For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
Some day or other, his head in a morion
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he 'll kick up,
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,
And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue crust,
Then I shall scrape together my earnings ;
For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes,
And our children all went the way of the roses ;
It 's a long lane that knows no turnings.
One needs but little tackle to travel in ;
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue :
And for a staff, what beats the javelin
With which his boars my father pinned you?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful,

I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly!
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
What 's a man's age? He must hurry more,
that 's all;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year
to hold:
When we mind labour, then, then only,
we 're too old—
What age had Methusalem when he begat
Saul?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship
sees,
(Come all the way from the north-parts with
sperm oil)
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,
And find my lady, or hear the last news of
her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy
hop,
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.
And when my Cotnar begins to operate
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper
rate,
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each
flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with—as if by accident—
"You never knew then, how it all ended,
"What fortune good or bad attended
"The little lady your Queen befriended?"
—And when that 's told me, what 's remain-
ing?

This world 's too hard for my explaining.
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine,
He also must be such a lady's scorner!
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:
Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw.
—So, I shall find out some sung corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
Turn myself round and bid the world good night;
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
To a world where will be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them.
Amen!

SONG FROM "PIPPA PASSES."

The year 's at the spring,
And day 's at the morn;
Morning 's at seven;
The hill-side 's dew-pearled;
The lark 's on the wing;
The snail 's on the thorn;
God 's in His heaven—
All 's right with the world.

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX."

[16—.]

I

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III

'T was moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

IV

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray:

V

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!

And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

VI

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris "Stay spur!
"Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault 's not in her,
"We 'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!

VIII

"How they 'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;

And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X

And all I remember is, friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

SONG FROM "PARACELSUS."

I

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair: such balsam falls
Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island gain.

II

And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled;
Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vowed,
With mothed and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR.

1842.

I.

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

III

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)

O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

V

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)
All that 's meant me—satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I 'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride!

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day;

With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
"That soar, to earth may fall,
"Let once my army leader Lannes
"Waver at yonder wall,—"
Out 'twixt the battery smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
"We've got you Ratisbon!
"The Marshal 's in the market-place,
"And you 'll be there anon

"To see your flag-bird flap his vans
"Where I, to heart's desire,
"Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V

The chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes.
"You're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
"I'm killed, sire!" And his chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.

THE LOST LEADER.

I

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others, she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,

Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire.
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devil's-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,

Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

IN A GONDOLA.

He sings.

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing.
For the stars help me, and the sea bears part;
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-place.

She speaks.

Say after me, and try to say
My very words, as if each word
Came from you of your own accord,
In your own voice, in your own way:
"This woman's heart and soul and brain
"Are mine as much as this gold chain
"She bids me wear; which" (say again)
"I choose to make by cherishing

"A precious thing, or choose to fling
"Over the boat-side, ring by ring."
And yet once more say . . . no word more!
Since words are only words. Give o'er!

Unless you call me, all the same,
Familiarly by my pet name,
Which if the Three should hear you call,
And me reply to, would proclaim
At once our secret to them all.
Ask of me, too, command me, blame—
Do, break down the partition-wall
'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
Curtained in dusk and splendid folds!
What 's left but—all of me to take?
I am the Three's: prevent them, slake
Your thirst! 'Tis said, the Arab sage
In practising with gems, can loose
Their subtle spirit in his cruce
And leave but ashes: so, sweet mage,
Leave them my ashes when thy use
Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

He sings.

I

Past we glide, and past, and past!
What 's that poor Agnese doing
Where they make the shutters fast?
Grey Zanobi 's just a-wooing
To his couch the purchased bride:
Past we glide!

II

Past we glide, and past, and past!
Why 's the Pucci Palace flaring
Like a beacon to the blast?
Guests by hundreds, not one caring
If the dear host's neck were wried:
Past we glide!

She sings.

I

The moth's kiss, first!
Kiss me as if you made believe
You were not sure, this eve,
How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst.

II

The bee's kiss, now!
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,—
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so, all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings.

I

What are we two?
I am a Jew,

And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,
To a feast of our tribe;
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

II

Say again, what we are?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is withering away
Some . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

He muses.

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
The land's lap or the water's breast?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows, just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must;
Which life were best on Summer eves?

He speaks, musing.

Lie back: could thought of mine improve
you?
From this shoulder let there spring
A wing; from this, another wing;
Wings; not legs and feet, shall move you;
Snow-white must they spring, to blend
With your flesh, but I intend
They shall deepen to the end,
Broader, into burning gold,
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world!
Rescue me thou, the only real!
And scare away this mad ideal
That came, nor motions to depart!
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

Still he muses.

I

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader? While there 's cast
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, Himself has past
His stylet through my back; I reel;
And . . . is it thou I feel?

II

They trail me, these three godless knaves,
Past every church that saints and saves,

Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursed graves,
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And . . . on thy breast I sink!

She replies, musing.

I

Dip your arm o'er the boat side, elbow-deep,
As I do: thus: were death so unlike sleep,
Caught this way? Death 's to fear from flame or steel,
Or poison doubtless; but from water—feel!

II

Go find the bottom! Would you stay me? There!
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away: since you have praised my hair,
'T is proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks.

Row home? must we row home? Too surely
Know I where its front 's demurely
Over the Guidecca piled;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All 's the set face of a child:

But behind it, where 's trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead!
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you—
To catch your lory that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony,
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach,
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear lory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain,
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again.
Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine! What should your chamber
do?
—With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day last, but wake

At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
Who brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave
Around them such a magic tether
That dumb they look: your harp, believe
With all the sensitive tight strings
Which dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumberously, as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur, wheresoe'er they graze,
As an angel may, between the maze
Of midnight palace-pillars, on
And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone
Through guilty glorious Babylon.
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
As the dry limpet for the lymph
Come with a tune he knows so well.
And how your statues' hearts must swell!
And how your pictures must descend
To see each other, friend with friend!
Oh, could you take them by surprise,
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke
Doing the quaintest courtesies
To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke!
And, deeper into her rock den,
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
You'd find retreated from the ken
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—
As if the Tizian thinks of her,
And is not, rather, gravely bent
On seeing for himself what toys

Are these, his progeny invent,
What litter now the board employs
Whereon he signed a document
That got him murdered! Each enjoys
Its night so well, you cannot break
The sport up: so, indeed must make
More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks.

I

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
Is used to tie the jasmine back
That overfloods my room with sweets,
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
My Zanze! If the ribbon 's black,
The Three are watching: keep away!

II

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreathe
A mesh of water-weeds about
Its prow, as if he unaware
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair!
That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.
There 's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are we.
Only one minute more to-night with me?
Resume your past self of a month ago!
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
The lady with the colder breast than snow.
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand
More than I touch yours when I step to land.
Just say, "All thanks, Siora!"—

Heart to heart
And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we
part,
Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou
art!

He is surprised, and stabbed.

It was ordained to be so, sweet!—and best
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy
breast,
Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not
scorn
To death, because they never lived: but I
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more
kiss)—can die!

A LOVERS' QUARREL.

I

Oh, what a dawn of day!
How the March sun feels like May!
All is blue again
After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.
Only, my Love's away!
I 'd as lief that the blue were gray.

II

Runnels, which rillets swell,
Must be dancing down the dell,
With a foaming head
On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell:
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my love but attend as well.

III

Dearest, three months ago!
When we lived blocked-up with snow,—
When the wind would edge
In and in his wedge,
In, as far as the point could go—
Not to our ingle, though,
Where we loved each the other so!

IV

Laughs with so little cause!
We devised games out of straws.
We would try and trace
One another's face
In the ash, as an artist draws;
Free on each other's flaws,
How we chattered like two church daws!

V

What's in the "Times"?—a scold
At the Emperor deep and cold:
He has taken a bride
To his gruesome side,

That 's as fair as himself is bold :
There they sit ermine-stoled,
And she powders her hair with gold.

VI

Fancy the Pampas sheen !
Miles and miles of gold and green
Where the sunflowers blow
In a solid glow,
And to break now and then the screen—
Black neck and eyeballs keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between !

VII

Try, will our table turn ?
Lay your hands there light, and yearn
Till the yearning slips
Thro' the finger tips
In a fire which a few discern,
And a very few feel burn,
And the rest, they may live and learn.

VIII

Then we would up and pace,
For a change, about the place,
Each with arm o'er neck:
'T is our quarter-deck,
We are seamen in woeful case.
Help in the ocean-space!
Or, if no help, we 'll embrace.

IX

See, how she looks now, dressed
In a sledging cap and vest !

'T is a huge fur cloak—
Like a reindeer's roke
Falls the lappet along the breast:
Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

X

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
Or I tint your lip
With a burnt stick's tip
And you turn into such a man!
Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan.

XI

Dearest, three months ago,
When the mesmerizer Snow
With his hand's first sweep
Put the earth to sleep,
'T was a time when the heart could
All—how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro?

XII

Dearest, three months ago,
When we loved each other so,
Lived and loved the same
Till an evening came
When a shaft from the devil's bow
Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe!

XIII

Not from the heart beneath—
'T was a bubble born of breath,
Neither sneer nor vaunt,
Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth!
Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

XIV

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last
Me, your own, your You,—
Since, as truth is true,
I was You all the happy past—
Me do you leave aghast
With the memories We amassed?

XV

Love, if you knew the light
That your soul casts in my sight,
How I look to you
For the pure and true,
And the beautous and the right,—
Bear with a moment's spite
When a mere mote threats the white!

XVI

What of a hasty word?
In the fleshy heart not stirred
By a worm's pin-prick
Where its roots are quick?

See the eye, by a fly's foot blurred—
Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

XVII

Foul be the world or fair
More or less, how can I care?
'T is the world the same
For my praise or blame,
And endurance is easy there.
Wrong in the one thing rare—
Oh, it is hard to bear!

XVIII

Here 's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows;
We shall have the word
In a minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows:
Heaps of the guelder-rose!
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash—
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum!

XX

Then, were the world well-stripped
Of the gear wherein equipped
I

We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—
Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

XXI

Each in the crypt would cry
"But one freezes here! and why?
"When a heart, as chill,
"At my own would thrill
"Back to life, and its fires out-fly?
"Heart, shall we live or die?
"The rest... settle by-and-by!"

XXII

So, she 'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.
It is twelve o'clock:
I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar:
I shall pull her through the door,
I shall have her for evermore!

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

FAME.

See, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime;
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
Have struggled through its binding osier rods;

Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by;
How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date!

LOVE.

So, the year 's done with!
(*Love me for ever!*)
All March begun with,
April's endeavour;
May-wreaths that bound me
June needs must sever;
Now snows fall round me,
Quenching June's fever—
(*Love me for ever!*)

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

I

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 't is so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be—

My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

III

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

V

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought,—All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

VI

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.

There 's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

VII

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'T is something, nay 't is much: but then,
Have you yourself what 's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who have never turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding 's a joy! For me, I ride.

VIII

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that 's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
"But in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

IX

Who knows what 's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being—had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem
best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

X

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride ride together, forever ride?

MESMERISM.

I

All I believed is true!
I am able yet
All I want, to get
By a method as strange as new:
Dare I trust the same to you?

II

If at night, when doors are shut,
And the wood-worm picks,
And the death-watch ticks,
And the bar has a flag of smut,
And a cat 's in the water-butt—

III

And the socket floats and flares,
And the house-beams groan,
And a foot unknown
Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
And the locks slip unawares—

IV

And the spider, to serve his ends,
By a sudden thread,
Arms and legs outspread,
On the table's midst descends,
Comes to find, God knows what friends!—

V

If since eve drew in, I say,
I have sat and brought
(So to speak) my thought
To bear on the woman away,
Till I felt my hair turn grey—

VI

Till I seemed to have and hold,
In the vacancy
'Twixt the wall and me
From the hair-plait's chestnut-gold
To the foot in its muslin fold—

VII

Have and hold, then and there,
Her, from head to foot
Breathing and mute,
Passive and yet aware,
In the grasp of my steady stare—

VIII

Hold and have, there and then,
All her body and soul
That completes my whole,
All that women add to men,
In the clutch of my steady ken—

IX

Having and holding, till
I imprint her fast
On the void at last
As the sun does whom he will
By the calotypist's skill—

X

Then,—if my heart's strength serve,
And through all and each
Of the veils I reach
To her soul and never swerve
Knitting an iron nerve—

XI

Command her soul to advance
And inform the shape
Which has made escape
And before my countenance
Answers me glance for glance—

XII

I, still with a gesture fit
Of my hands that best
Do my soul's behest,
Pointing the power from it,
While myself do steadfast sit—

XIII

Steadfast and still the same
On my object bent,
While the hands give vent
To my ardour and my aim
And break into very flame—

XIV

Then I reach, I must believe,
Not her soul in vain,
For to me again
It reaches, and past retrieve
Is wound in the toils I weave;

XV

And must follow as I require,
As befits a thrall,
Bringing flesh and all,
Essence and earth-attire,
To the source of the tractile fire:

XVI

Till the house called hers, not mine,
With a growing weight
Seems to suffocate
If she break not its leaden line
And escape from its close confine.

XVII

Out of doors into the night!
On to the maze
Of the wild wood-ways,
Not turning to left nor right
From the pathway, blind with sight—

XVIII

Making thro' rain and wind
O'er the broken shrubs,
'Twixt the stems and stubs,
With a still, composed, strong mind,
Not a care for the world behind—

XIX

Swifter and still more swift,
As the crowding peace
Doth to joy increase
In the wide blind eyes uplift
Thro' the darkness and the drift!

XX

While I—to the shape, I too
Feel my soul dilate:
Nor a whit abate,
And relax not a gesture due,
As I see my belief come true.

XXI

For, there! have I drawn or no
Life to that lip?
Do my fingers dip
In a flame which again they throw
On the cheek that breaks a-glow?

XXII

Ha! was the hair so first?
What, unfilleted,
Made alive, and spread
Through the void with a rich outburst,
Chestnut gold-interspersed?

XXIII

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,
See, on either side,
Her two arms divide
Till the heart betwixt makes sign,
"Take me, for I am thine?"

XXIV

"Now—now"—the door is heard!
Hark, the stairs! and near—
Nearer—and here—
"Now!" and, at call the third,
She enters without a word.

XXV

On doth she march and on
To the fancied shape;
It is, past escape,
Herself, now: the dream is done
And the shadow and she are one.

XXVI

First, I will pray. Do Thou
That ownest the soul,
Yet wilt grant control
To another, nor disallow
For a time, restrain me now!

XXVII

I admonish me while I may,
Not to squander guilt,
Since require Thou wilt
At my hand its price one day!
What the price is, who can say?

BY THE FIRESIDE.

I

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn evenings come:
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too!

II

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book, as beseemeth age;
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose!

III

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
"There he is at it, deep in Greek:
"Now then, or never, out we slip
"To cut from the hazels by the creek
"A mainmast for our ship!"

IV

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

V

The outside frame, like your hazel-trees—
But the inside-archway widens fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

VI

I follow wherever I am led,
Knowing so well the leader's hand:
Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!

VII

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half-way up in the Alpine gorge!
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill, or an iron forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

VIII

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings!

IX

Does it feed the little lake below?
The speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow,
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow!

X

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

XI

On the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!
For the drop of the woodland fruit 's begun,
These early November hours,

XII

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needled mat of moss,

XIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
Of toad-stools peep indulged.

XIV

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge,
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

XV

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish-grey and mostly wet;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

XVI

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,

To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams—

XVII

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dresser's low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

XVIII

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
'T is John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

XIX

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating—good thought of our architect's—
Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;
The place is silent and aware;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

XXI

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?

XXII

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from our life's safe hem!

XXIII

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how—

XXIV

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
And you, too, find without rebuff
Response your soul seeks many a time,
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

XXV

My own, confirm me! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride

To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead?

XXVI

My own, see where the years conduct!
At first, 't was something our two souls
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
In each now: on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands

XXVIII

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine!

XXIX

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

XXX

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall!

XXXI

What did I say?—that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII

But at afternoon or almost eve
'T is better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

XXXIII

Hither we walked then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,

And care about the fresco's loss,
  And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

XXXV

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
  Look through the window's grated square:
Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,
  The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI

We stoop and look in through the grate,
  See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date;
  Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait!

XXXVII

Oh moment one and infinite!
  The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The West is tender, hardly bright:
  How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, its chrysolite!

XXXVIII

We two stood there with never a third,
  But each by each, as each knew well:
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
  The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

XXXIX

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this!

XL

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her:
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been.

XLI

For my heart had a touch of the woodland time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test!
"Hold the last fast!" runs the rhyme.

XLII

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can mend:
But a last leaf—fear to touch!

XLIII

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face

At some slight wind—best chance of all!
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall!

XLIV

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonise,
And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

XLV

You might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

XLVI

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far.

XLVII

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life: we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII

The forests had done it; there they stood;
We caught for a moment the powers at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX

How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does!

L

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man:
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan;
Each living his own, to boot.

LI

I am named and known by that moment's feat;
There took my station and degree;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet!

LII

And to watch you sink by the fireside now
Back again, as you mutely sit

Musing by firelight, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how!

LIII

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When autumn comes: which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

I

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou—
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say—
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
Would death, that leads me from thee, brook delay.

II

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand

The beating of my heart to reach its
place.
When shall I look for thee and feel thee
gone?
When cry for the old comfort and find none?
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III

Oh, I should fade—'t is willed so! Might I
save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious
too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves
that whole;
Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes all
things new.

IV

It would not be because my eye grew dim
Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks
to Him
Who never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest
grow dark.

V

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and
clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne

Alike, this body given to show it by!
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,
What plaudits from the next world after this,
Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky!

VI

And is it not the bitterer to think
That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
Although thy love was love in very deed?
I know that nature! Pass a festive day,
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

VII

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell;
If old things remain old things all is well,
For thou art grateful as becomes man best:
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

VIII

I seem to see! We meet and part; 't is brief;
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;
That is a portrait of me on the wall—
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call:
And for all this, one little hour to thank!

IX

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,
Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
"Therefore she is immortally my bride;
"Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

X

"So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,
"I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
"Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
"The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?
"—Where was it till the sunset? where anon
"It will be at the sunrise! What's to blame?"

XI

Is it so helpful to thee? Canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
Is the remainder of the way so long,
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream!

XII

—Ah, but the fresher faces! "Is it true,"
Thou 'lt ask, "some eyes are beautiful and new?
"Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such wealth?
"And if a man would press his lips to lips
"Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
"The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?

XIII

"It cannot change the love still kept for Her,
"More than if such a picture I prefer
"Passing a day with, to a room's bare side:
"The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
"Yet, while the Titian's Venus lies at rest,
"A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?"

XIV

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man's-truth I was bold to bid God see!

XV

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst
Away to the new faces—disentranced,
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more.
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
Image and superscription once they bore!

XVI

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
Since mine thou wast, mine art, and mine shalt be,
Faithful or faithless: sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee!

XVII

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why need the other women know so much,
And talk together, "Such the look and such
"The smile he used to love with, then as now!"

XIII

Might I die last and show thee! Should I find
Such hardships in the few years left behind,
If free to take and light my lamp, and go

Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
The better that they are so blank, I know!

XIX

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and more
By heart each word too much to learn at first;
And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were cause
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst!

XX

And yet thou art the nobler of us two:
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?
I 'll say then, here 's a trial and a task;
Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask:
Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

XXI

Pride?—when those eyes forestall the life behind
The death I have to go through!—when I find,
Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved.—And yet it will not be!

IN A YEAR.

I

Never any more,
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive:
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

II

Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun:
I as little understand
Love's decay.

III

When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sung,
—Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his cheek the colour sprung,
Then he heard.

IV

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed but air I breathed,
Satisfied!
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet:
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

V

"Speak, I love thee best!"
He exclaimed:
"Let thy love my own foretell!"
I confessed:
"Clasp my heart on thine
"Now unblamed,
"Since upon thy soul as well
"Hangeth mine!"

VI

Was it wrong to own,
Being truth?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth:
Since my lover gave me love,
I gave these.

VII

That was all I meant,
—To be just,
And the passion I had raised,
To content.

Since he chose to change
Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
Was it strange?

VIII

Would he loved me yet,
On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
—Paid my debt!
Gave more life and more,
Till all gone,
He should smile "She never seemed
"Mine before.

IX

"What, she felt the while,
"Must I think?
"Love 's so different with us men!"
He should smile:
"Dying for my sake—
"White and pink!
"Can't we touch these bubbles then
"But they break?"

X

Dear, the pang is brief,
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
Grows belief!
Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart:
Crumble it, and what comes next?
Is it God?

SONG FROM "JAMES LEE."

I

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
This autumn morning! How he sets his bones
To bask i' the sun, and thrust out knees and feet
For the ripple to run over in its mirth:
Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

II

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;
Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.
If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you.
Make the low nature better by your throes!
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

I

Let 's contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep:
All be as before, Love,
Only sleep!

II

What so wild as words are?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough!

III

See the creature stalking
While we speak!
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek.

IV

What so false as truth is,
False to thee?
Where the serpent's tooth is
Shun the tree—

V

Where the apple reddens,
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens
Eve and I.

VI

Be a god and hold me
With a charm!
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm!

VII

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love
Think thy thought—

VIII

Meet, if thou require it
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

IX

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night:
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight:

X

—Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me!)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

MEETING AT NIGHT.

I

The grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, through joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

PARTING AT MORNING.

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

WOMEN AND ROSES.

I

I dream of a red-rose tree.
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me?

II

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
Then follow women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day.
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
Beauties yet unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached:
Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time,
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh, to possess and be possessed!
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
Once but of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink but once and die!—In vain, the same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V

Dear rose, thy joy 's undimmed:
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI

Deep, as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips!
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure,
Girdle me for once! but no—the old measure,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud 's the babe unborn:
First streak of a new morn.

VIII

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear!
What is far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our flesh moulders,
What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the Artist that began her,
Shaped her to his mind!—Alas! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

MISCONCEPTIONS.

I

This is a spray the bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

II

This is a heart the queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic

Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on,—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

A PRETTY WOMAN.

I

That fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers!

II

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

III

You like us for a glance, you know—
For a word's sake
Or a sword's sake:
All 's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV

And in turn we make you ours, we say—
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V

All 's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—
Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet!

VI

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet!

VII

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there
Be its beauty
Its sole duty!
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

VIII

And while the face lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX

As,—why must one, for the love foregone
Scout mere liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for, gone!

X

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
Love with liking?
Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey bee?

XI

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
If love grew there
'T would undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection—
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
Into tinder,
And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

XV

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love fancies!
—A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose,—
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose.

XVII

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals,—
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

XVIII

Then how grace a rose? I know a way!
Leave it, rather.
Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away.

A LIGHT WOMAN.

I

So far as our story approaches the end,
Which do you pity the most of us three?—
My friend, or the mistress of my friend
With her wanton eyes, or me?

II

My friend was already too good to lose,
And seemed in the way of improvement yet,
When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose
And over him drew her net.

III

When I saw him tangled in her toils,
A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
The hundredth for a whim!

IV

And before my friend be wholly hers,
How easy to prove to him, I said,
An eagle 's the game her pride prefers,
Though she snaps at a wren instead!

V

So, I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,
My hand sought hers as in earnest need,
And round she turned for my noble sake,
And gave me herself indeed.

VI

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
The wren is he, with his maiden face.
—You look away and your lip is curled?
Patience, a moment's space!

VII

For see, my friend goes shaking and white,
He eyes me as the basilisk:
I have turned, it appears, his day to night,
Eclipsing his sun's disk.

VIII

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:
"Though I love her—that, he comprehends—
"One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)
"And be loyal to one's friends!"

IX

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame
As a pear late basking over a wall;
Just a touch to try, and off it came;
'T is mine,—can I let it fall?

X

With no mind to eat it, that 's the worst!
Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist?
'T was quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
When I gave its stalk a twist.

XI

And I,—what I seem to my friend, you see;
What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess:
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?
No hero, I confess.

XII

'T is an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own;
Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone!

XIII

One likes to show the truth for the truth;
That the woman was light is very true:
But suppose she says,—Never mind that youth!
What wrong have I done to you?

XIV

Well, any how, here the story stays,
So far at least as I understand;
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays
Here 's a subject made to your hand!

LOVE IN A LIFE.

I

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
Next time, herself !—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume !
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew;
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
But 't is twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE.

Escape me?
Never—
Beloved!
While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear:
It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.
But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up and begin again,—
So the chace takes up one's life, that's all.
While, look but once from your farthest bound
At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope goes to ground
Than a new one, straight to the self-same mark,
I shape me—
Ever
Removed!

THE LABORATORY.

ANCIEN RÉGIME.

I

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy—
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

II

He is with her, and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them!—I am here.

III

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste!
Better sit thus and observe thy strange things,
Than go where men wait me, and dance at the King's.

IV

That in the mortar—you call it a gum.
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

V

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!

VI

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!
But to light a pastile, and Elise with her head
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!

VII

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim!
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

VIII

What a drop! She 's not little, no minion like me!
That 's why she ensnared him: this never will free
The soul from those masculine eyes,—say, "No!"
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought

Could I keep them one half minute fixed,
she would fall
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

X

Not that I bid you spare her the pain;
Let death be felt and the proof remain:
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
He is sure to remember her dying face!

XI

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be
not morose;
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee!
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

XII

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your
fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if
you will!
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the
King's!

GOLD HAIR:

A STORY OF PORNIC.

I

Oh, the beautiful girl, too white,
Who lived at Pornic down by the sea,
Just where the sea and the Loire unite!
And a boasted name in Brittany
She bore, which I will not write.

II

Too white, for the flower of life is red;
Her flesh was the soft seraphic screen
Of a soul that is meant (her parents said)
To just see earth, and hardly be seen,
And blossom in heaven instead.

III

Yet earth saw one thing, one how fair!
One grace that drew to its full on earth:
Smiles might be sparse on her cheek so spare,
And her waist went half a girdle's girth,
But she had her great gold hair.

IV

Hair, such a wonder of flix and floss,
Freshness and fragrance—floods of it, too!
Gold, did I say? Nay, gold 's mere dross:
Here, Life smiled, "Think what I meant to do!"
And Love sighed, "Fancy my loss!"

V.

So, when she died, it was scarce more strange
Than that, when some delicate evening dies;
And you follow its spent sun's pallid range,
There 's a shoot of colour startles the skies
With sudden, violent change,—

VI

That, while the breath was nearly to seek,
As they put the little cross to her lips,

She changed ; a spot came out on her cheek,
A spark from her eye in mid-eclipse,
And she broke forth, "I must speak!"

VII

"Not my hair!" made the girl her moan—
"All the rest is gone or to go ;
"But the last, last grace, my all, my own,
"Let it stay in the grave, that the ghosts may know!
"Leave my poor gold hair alone!"

VIII

The passion thus vented, dead lay she :
Her parents sobbed their worst on that,
All friends joined in, nor observed degree :
For indeed the hair was to wonder at,
As it spread—not flowing free.

IX

But curled around her brow, like a crown,
And coiled beside her cheeks, like a cap,
And calmed about her neck—ay, down
To her breast, pressed flat, without a gap
I' the gold, it reached her gown.

X

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge
'Mid the yellow wealth, nor disturbed its hair :
E'en the priest allowed death's privilege,
As he planted the crucifix with care
On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

XI

And thus was she buried, inviolate
Of body and soul, in the very space
By the altar; keeping saintly state
In Pornic church, for her pride of race,
Pure life and piteous fate.

XII

And in after-time would your fresh tear fall,
Though your mouth might twitch with a dubious smile,
As they told you of gold both robe and pall,
How she prayed them leave it alone awhile,
So it never was touched at all.

XIII

Years flew; this legend grew at last
The life of the lady; all she had done,
All been, in the memories fading fast
Of lover and friend, was summed in one
Sentence survivors passed:—

XIV

To wit, she was meant for heaven, not earth;
Had turned an angel before the time:
Yet, since she was mortal, in such dearth
Of frailty, all you could count a crime
Was—she knew her gold hair's worth.

XV

At little pleasant Pornic church,
It chanced, the pavement wanted repair,

Was taken to pieces : left in the lurch,
A certain sacred space lay bare,
And the boys began research.

XVI

'T was the space where our sires would lay a saint,
A benefactor,—a bishop, suppose,
A baron with armour-adornments quaint,
Dame with chased ring and jewelled rose,
Things sanctity saves from taint ;

XVII

So we come to find them in after-days
When the corpse is presumed to have done with gauds
Of use to the living, in many ways :
For the boys get pelf, and the town applauds,
And the church deserves the praise.

XVIII

They grubbed with a will : and at length—*O cor*
Humanum, pectora cœca, and the rest !—
They found—no gaud they were prying for,
No ring, no rose, but—who would have guessed ?—
A double Louis-d'or !

XIX

Here was a case for the priest : he heard,
Marked, inwardly digested, laid

Finger on nose, smiled, "A little bird
"Chirps in my ear:" then, "Bring a spade,
"Dig deeper!"—he gave the word.

XX

And lo, when they came to the coffin-lid,
Or rotten planks which composed it once,
Why, there lay the girl's skull wedged amid
A mint of money, it served for the nonce
To hold in its hair-heaps hid!

XXI

Hid there? Why? Could the girl be wont
(She the stainless soul) to treasure up
Money, earth's trash and heaven's affront?
Had a spider found out the communion-cup?
Was a toad in the christening-font?

XXII

Truth is truth: too true it was.
Gold! She hoarded and hugged it first,
Longed for it, leaned o'er it, loved it—alas—
Till the humour grew to a head and burst,
And she cried, at the final pass,—

XXIII

"Talk not of God, my heart is stone!
"Nor lover, nor friend—be gold for both!
"Gold I lack; and, my all, my own,
"It shall hide in my hair. I scarce die loth
"If they let my hair alone!"

XXIV

Louis-d'ors, some six times five,
And duly double, every piece.
Now, do you see? With the priest to shrive,
With parents preventing her soul's release
By kisses that kept alive,—

XXV

With heaven's gold gates about to ope,
With friends' praise, gold-like, lingering still,
An instinct had bidden the girl's hand grope
For gold, the true sort—"Gold in heaven, if you will;
"But I keep earth's too, I hope."

XXVI

Enough! The priest took the grave's grim yield:
The parents, they eyed that price of sin
As if *thirty pieces* lay revealed
On the place *to bury strangers in*,
The hideous Potter's Field.

XXVII

But the priest bethought him: "'Milk that 's spilt'
"—You know the adage! Watch and pray!
"Saints tumble to earth with so slight a tilt!
"It would build a new altar; that, we may!"
And the altar therewith was built.

XXVIII

Why I deliver this horrible verse?
As the text of a sermon, which now I preach.
Evil or good may be better or worse
In the human heart, but the mixture of each
Is a marvel and a curse.

XXIX

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith may be false, I find;
For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight.

XXX

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons; this, to begin:
'T is the faith that launched point-blank her dart
At the head of a lie—taught Original Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

THE STATUE AND THE BUST.

There 's a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East,
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;
She leaned forth, one on either hand;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, "the Great Duke Ferdinand."

That self-same instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"
—"A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure—
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
She looked at him, as one who awakes:
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held, that self-same night,
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three parts light,
But the palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)
Turned, in the midst of his multitude,
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
If a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bed-chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the East,
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride:
"Your window and its world suffice,"
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied—

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,
"May his window serve as my loop of hell
"Whence a damned soul looks on paradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
"Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
"Ere I count another ave-bell.

"'T is only the coat of a page to borrow,
"And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
"And I save my soul—but not to-morrow"—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
"My father tarries to bless my state:
"I must keep it one day more for him.

"Is one day more so long to wait?
"Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
"We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
So we resolve on a thing, and sleep:
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, "Dear or cheap
"As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
"To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled "'T was a very funeral,
"Your lady will think, this feast of ours,—
"A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

"What if we break from the Arno bowers,
"And try if Petraja, cool and green,
"Cure last night's fault with this morning's
flowers?"

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said "Too much favour for me so mean!

"But, alas! my lady leaves the South;
"Each wind that comes from the Apennine
"Is a menace to her tender youth:

"Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
"If she quits her palace twice this year,
"To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.
"Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:
"Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself—"Which night shall bring
"Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—
"Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—
"For to-night the Envoy arrives from France
"Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance.
"To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
"With its hope of my lady's countenance:

"For I ride—what should I do but ride?
"And, passing her palace, if I list,
"May glance at its window—well betide!"

So said, so done: nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow's sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one day more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth:
The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit, in winter's dearth,
By store of fruits that supplant the rose:
The world and its ways have a certain worth:

And to press a point while these oppose
Were simply policy; better wait:
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she—she watched the square like a book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook:

When the picture was reached the book was done,
And she turned from the picture at night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years; gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above:
But who can take a dream for a truth?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked

Fronting her silent in the glass—
"Summon here," she suddenly said,
"Before the rest of my old self pass,

"Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
"Who fashions the clay no love will change,
"And fixes a beauty never to fade.

"Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
"Arrest the remains of young and fair,
"And rivet them while the seasons range

"Make me a face on the window there,
"Waiting as ever, mute the while,
"My love to pass below in the square!

"And let me think that it may beguile
"Dreary days which the dead must spend
"Down in their darkness under the aisle,

"To say, 'What matters it at the end?
"'I did no more while my heart was warm
"'Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.'

"Where is the use of the lip's red charm,
"The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
"And the blood that blues the inside arm—

"Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
"The earthly gift to an end divine?
"A lady of clay is as good, I trow."

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine—

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady's face—

Eyeing ever, with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
Some one who ever is passing by—)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch
In Florence, "Youth—my dream escapes!
"Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes—
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
"Ere his body finds the grave that gapes?

"John of Douay shall effect my plan,
"Set me on horseback here aloft,
"Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so oft:
"That men may admire, when future suns
"Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay brave in bronze—
"Admire and say, 'When he was alive
"'How he would take his pleasure once!'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive
"To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb
"At idleness which aspires to strive."

So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world to this.

I hear you reproach, "But delay was best,
"For their end was a crime."—Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?
Where a button goes, 't were an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham:
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table 's a hat, and your prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play !—is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will

The counter, our lovers staked, was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin :
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

Where the quiet coloured end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles,
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince,
Ages since,
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

II

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

III

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspréads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;

Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

IV

Now,—the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

V

And I know—while thus the quiet-colored eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
Melt away—

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

VI

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades,
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

VII

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,

Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.

TIME'S REVENGES.

I've a Friend, over the sea;
I like him, but he loves me.
It all grew out of the books I write;
They find such favour in his sight
That he slaughters you with savage looks
Because you don't admire my books.
He does himself though,—and if some vein
Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
Round should I just turn quietly,
Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
Till I found him, come from his foreign land
To be my nurse in this poor place,
And make my broth and wash my face
And light my fire and, all the while,
Bear with his old good-humoured smile
That I told him "Better have kept away
"Than come and kill me, night and day,

"With, worse than fever throbs and shoots,
"The creaking of his clumsy boots."
I am as sure that this he would do,
As that Saint Paul's is striking two.
And I think I rather . . . woe is me!
—Yes, rather would see him than not see
If lifting a hand could seat him there
Before me in the empty chair
To-night, when my head aches indeed,
And I can neither think nor read
Nor make these purple fingers hold
The pen; this garret 's freezing cold!

And I 've a Lady—there he wakes
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
Within me, at her name, to pray
Fate send some creature in the way
Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
Upthrust and outward-borne,
So I might prove myself that sea
Of passion which I needs must be!
Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint
And my style infirm and its figures faint,
All the critics say, and more blame yet,
And not one angry word you get.
But, please you, wonder I would put
My cheek beneath that lady's foot
Rather than trample under mine
The laurels of the Florentine,
And you shall see how the devil spends
A fire God gave for other ends!
I tell you, I stride up and down
This garret, crowned with love's best crown,

And feasted with love's perfect feast,
To think I kill for her, at least,
Body and soul and peace and fame,
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
—So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
Filled full, eaten out and in
With the face of her, the eyes of her,
The lips, the little chin, the stir
Of shadow round her mouth; and she
—I 'll tell you,—calmly would decree
That I should roast at a slow fire,
If that would compass her desire
And make her one whom they invite
To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be heaven; there must be hell;
Meantime, there is our earth here—well!

WARING.

I

1

What 's become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London town?

II

Who 'd have guessed it from his lip
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,

On the night he thus took ship
Or started landward?—little caring
For us, it seems, who supped together
(Friends of his too, I remember)
And walked home thro' the merry weather,
The snowiest in all December.
I left his arm that night myself
For what-'s-his-name's, the new prose-poet
Who wrote the book there on the shelf—
How, forsooth, was I to know it
If Waring meant to glide away
Like a ghost at break of day?
Never looked he half so gay!

III

He was prouder than the devil:
How he must have cursed our revel!
Ay, and many other meetings,
Indoor visits, outdoor greetings
As up and down he paced this London,
With no work done, but great works undone,
Where scarce twenty knew his name.
Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
Written, bustled? Who 's to blame
If your silence kept unbroken?
"True, but there were sundry jottings,
"Stray-leaves, fragments, blurrs and blottings,
"Certain first steps were achieved
"Already which"—(is that your meaning?)
"Had well borne out whoe'er believed
"In more to come!" But who goes gleaning

Hedge-side chance-blades, while full-sheaved
Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening
Pride alone, puts forth such claims
O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV

Meantime, how much I loved him,
I find out now I've lost him.
I who cared not if I moved him,
Who could so carelessly accost him
Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company,
His eyes that just a little wink
As deep I go into the merit
Of this and that distinguished spirit—
His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,
As long I dwell on some stupendous
And tremendous (Heaven defend us!
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
Demoniaco-seraphic
Penman's latest piece of graphic.
Nay, my very wrist grows warm
With his dragging weight of arm.
E'en so, swimmingly appears,
Through one's after-supper musings,
Some lost lady of old years
With her beauteous vain endeavour
And goodness unrepaid as ever;
The face, accustomed to refusings,
We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never
Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
Being aught like false, forsooth, to?
Telling aught but honest truth to?

What a sin, had we centupled
Its possessor's grace and sweetness!
No! she heard in its completeness
Truth, for truth 's a weighty matter
And, truth at issue, we can't flatter!
Well, 't is done with; she 's exempt
From damning us thro' such a sally;
And so she glides, as down a valley,
Taking up with her contempt,
Past our reach; and in, the flowers
Shut her unregarded hours.

V

Oh, could I have him back once more,
This Waring, but one half-day more!
Back, with the quiet face of yore,
So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine! I 'd fool him to his bent.
Feed, should not he, to heart's content?
I 'd say, "to only have conceived,
"Planned your great works, apart from progress,
"Surpasses little works achieved!"
I 'd lie so, I should be believed.
I 'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned child!
Or as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled
To capture; and completely gives
Its pettish humours license, barely
Requiring that it lives.

VI

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed!
Travels Waring East away?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstarted
Somewhere as a god,
Hordes grown European-hearted,
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
Or who in Moscow, towards the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls
Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough
And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
And leave the grand white neck no gash?
Waring in Moscow, to those rough
Cold northern natures borne perhaps,
Like the lambwhite maiden dear
From the circle of mute kings
Unable to repress the tear,
Each as his sceptre down he flings,
To Dian's fame at Taurica,
Where now a captive priestess, she alway
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten
beach:

As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands
Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry
Amid their barbarous twitter!
In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!
Ay, most likely 't is in Spain
That we and Waring meet again
Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane
Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
All fire and shine, abrupt as when there 's slid
Its stiff gold blazing pall
From some black coffin-lid.
Or, best of all,
I love to think
The leaving us was just a feint;
Back here to London did he slink,
And now works on without a wink
Of sleep, and we are on the brink
Of something great in fresco-paint:
Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
Up and down and o'er and o'er
He splashes, as none splashed before
Since Great Caldara Polidore.
Or Music means this land of ours
Some favour yet, to pity won
By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,—
"Give me my so-long promised son,
"Let Waring end what I begun!"

Then down he creeps and out he steals,
Only when the night conceals
His face; in Kent 't is cherry-time,
Or hops are picking: or at prime
Of March he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
And the early moths had sprung
To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath;
While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves
Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure,
Out of a myriad noises soft,
Into a tone that can endure
Amid the noise of a July noon
When all God's creatures crave their boon,
All at once, and all in tune,
And get it, happy as Waring then,
Having first within his ken
What a man might do with men:
And far too glad, in the even-glow,
To mix with the world he meant to take
Into his hand, he told you, so—
And out of it his world to make,
To contract and to expand
As he shut or oped his hand.
Oh Waring, what 's to really be?
A clear stage and a crowd to see!

Some Garrick, say, out shall not he
The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck?
Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
Some Junius—am I right?—shall tuck
His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife!
Some Chatterton shall have the luck
Of calling Rowley into life!
Someone shall somehow run a muck
With this old world, for want of strife
Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
To rouse us, Waring! Who 's alive?
Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
Distinguished names! but 't is, somehow,
As if they played at being names
Still more distinguished, like the games
Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
With a visage of the sternest!
Bring the real times back, confessed
Still better than our very best!

II

I

"When I last saw Waring . . ."
(How all turned to him who spoke!
You saw Waring? Truth or joke?
In land-travel or sea-faring?)

II

"We were sailing by Triest
"Where a day or two we harboured:
"A sunset was in the West,

"When, looking over the vessel's side,
"One of our company espied
"A sudden speck to larboard.
"And as a sea-duck flies and swims
"At once, so came the light craft up,
"With its sole lateen sail that trims
"And turns (the water round its rims
"Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
"And by us like a fish it curled,
"And drew itself up close beside,
"Its great sail on the instant furled,
"And o'er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,
"(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
"'Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
"'Or fruit, tobacco and cigars?
"'A pilot for you to Triest?
"'Without one, look you ne'er so big,
"'They'll never let you up the bay!
"'We natives should know best.'
"I turned, and 'just those fellows' way,'
"Our captain said, 'The 'long-shore thieves
"'Are laughing at us in their sleves.'

III

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;
"And one, half-hidden by his side
"Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
"With great grass hat and kerchief black,
"Who looked up with his kingly throat,
"Said somewhat, while the other shook
"His hair back from his eyes to look
"Their longest at us; then the boat,
"I know not how, turned sharply round,

"Laying her whole side on the sea
"As a leaping fish does ; from the lee
"Into the weather, cut somehow
"Her sparkling path beneath our bow,
"And so went off, as with a bound,
"Into the rosy and golden half
"O' the sky, to overtake the sun
"And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
"Its singing cave ; yet I caught one
"Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
"And neither times nor toil could mar
"Those features : so I saw the last
"Of Waring !"—You? Oh, never star
Was lost here but it rose afar !
Look East, where whole new thousands are!
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD.

I

Oh, to be in England now that April 's there,
And whoever wakes in England sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now !
And after April, when May follows
And the white-throat builds, and all the swallows !

Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That 's the wise thrush : he sings each song twice over
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture !
And, though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND.

That second time they hunted me
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
And Austria, hounding far and wide
Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,
Breathed hot and instant on my trace.—
I made, six days, a hiding-place
Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
The fire-flies from the roof above,
Bright creeping thro' the moss they love :
—How long it seems since Charles was lost !
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight ;

And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay
With signal-fires. Well, there I lay
Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,
And Charles's miserable end,
And much beside, two days; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize: you know,
With us in Lombardy, they bring
Provisions packed on mules, a string,
With little bells that cheer their task,
And casks, and boughs on every cask
To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
These I let pass in jingling line,
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
The peasants from the village, too;
For at the very rear would troop
Their wives and sisters in a group
To help, I knew; when these had passed,
I threw my glove to strike the last,
Taking the chance: she did not start,
Much less cry out, but stooped apart,
One instant rapidly glanced round,
And saw me beckon from the ground.
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
She picked my glove up while she stripped
A branch off, then rejoined the rest
With that; my glove lay in her breast:
Then I drew breath; they disappeared:
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
Exactly where my glove was thrown.
Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me
Rested the hopes of Italy;
I had devised a certain tale
Which, when 't was told her, could not fail
Persuade a peasant of its truth;
I meant to call a freak of youth
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
And no temptation to betray.
But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far, and stood,
Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the worm—
At first sight of her eyes, I said,
"I am that man upon whose head
"They fix the price, because I hate
"The Austrians over us; the State
"Will give you gold—oh, gold so much!—
"If you betray me to their clutch,
"And be your death, for aught I know,
"If once they find you saved their foe.
"Now, you must bring me food and drink,
"And also paper, pen and ink,
"And carry safe what I shall write
"To Padua, which you 'll reach at night
"Before the duomo shuts; go in,
"And wait till Tenebræ begin;
"Walk to the third confessional,
"Between the pillar and the wall,

"And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
"Say it a second time, then cease;
"And if the voice inside returns,
"*From Christ and Freedom; what concerns*
"*The cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip
"My letter where you placed your lip;
"Then come back happy we have done
"Our mother service—I, the son,
"As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes:
I was no surer of sun-rise
Than of her coming: we conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover—stout and tall,
She said—then let her eyelids fall,
"He could do much"—as if some doubt
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
"She could not speak for others, who
"Had other thoughts; herself she knew:"
And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued
Another path; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me: she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand, and lay my own
Upon her head—"This faith was shown
"To Italy, our mother; she
"Uses my hand and blesses thee."

She followed down to the sea-shore;
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
Concerning—much less wished for—aught
Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die!
I never was in love; and since
Charles proved false, what shall now convince
My inmost heart I have a friend?
However, if I pleased to spend
Real wishes on myself—say, three—
I know at least what one should be.
I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands. And next,
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers. Last
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared!
My brothers live in Austria's pay
—Disowned me long ago, men say;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so—perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine—
Are turning wise: while some opine

"Freedom grows license," some suspect
"Haste breeds delay," and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So, with a sullen "All 's for best,"
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt: what harm
If I sat on the door-side bench,
And while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes—just
Her children's ages and their names,
And what may be the husband's aims
For each of them. I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how
It steals the time! To business now

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY.

PIANO DI SORRENTO.

FORTU, Fortù, my beloved one, sit here by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet! I am sure, if I tried,

I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco.
Now, open your eyes;
Let me keep you amused, till he vanish in
black from the skies,
With telling my memories over, as you tell
your beads;
All the Plain saw me gather, I garland—the
flowers or the weeds.

Time for rain! for your long hot dry
Autumn had net-worked with brown
The white skin of each grape on the bunches,
marked like a quail's crown,
Those creatures you make such account of,
whose heads,—specked with white
Over brown like a great spider's back, as I
told you last night,—
Your mother bites off for her supper. Red-
ripe as could be,
Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
in halves on the tree.
And betwixt the loose walls of great flint-
stone, or in the thick dust
On the path, or straight out of the rock-side,
wherever could thrust
Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower
its yellow face up,
For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
some five for one cup.
So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
what change was in store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets
which woke me before

I could open my shutter, made fast with a
bough and a stone,
And look through the twisted dead vine-
twigs, sole lattice that 's known.
Quick and sharp rang the rings down the
net-poles, while, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother tugged at them,
the rain in their teeth.
And out upon all the flat house-roofs, where
split figs lay drying,
The girls took the frails under cover: nor
use seemed in trying
To get out the boats and go fishing, for,
under the cliff,
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-
rock. No seeing our skiff
Arrive about noon from Amalfi!—our fisher
arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us, all
trembling alive,
With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit;
you touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all man-
ner of horns and of humps,
Which only the fisher looks grave at, while
round him like imps,
Cling screaming the children as naked and
brown as his shrimps;
Himself too as bare to the middle—you see
round his neck
The string and its brass coin suspended
that saves him from wreck.

But to-day not a boat reached Salerno: so back, to a man,
Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards grape-harvest began.
In the vat, halfway up in our house-side, like blood the juice spins,
While your brother all bare-legged is dancing till breathless he grins
Dead-beaten in effort on effort to keep the grapes under,
Since still, when he seems all but master, in pours the fresh plunder
From girls who keep coming and going with basket on shoulder,
And eyes shut against the rains driving; your girls that are older,
For under the hedges of aloe, and where, on its bed
Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple lies pulpy and red,
All the young ones are kneeling and filling their laps with the snails
Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—your best of regales,
As to-night will be proved to my sorrow, when, supping in state,
We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen, three over one plate)
With lasagne so tempting to swallow in slippery ropes,
And gourds fried in great purple slices, that colour of popes.

Meantime, see the grape bunch they've
brought you : the rain-water slips
O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
which the wasp to your lips
Still follows with fretful persistence. Nay,
taste, while awake,
This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball
that peels, flake by flake,
Like an onion, each smoother and whiter :
next, sip this weak wine
From the thin green glass flask, with its
stopper, a leaf of the vine ;
And end with the prickly pear's red flesh
that leaves thro' its juice
The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth.

Scirocco is loose !
Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives
which, thick in one's track,
Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,
tho' not yet half black !
How the old twisted olive trunks shudder,
the medlars let fall
Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-
trees snap off, figs and all,
For here comes the whole of the tempest !
no refuge, but creep
Back again to my side and my shoulder,
and listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week,
when all the vine-boughs

Have been stripped of their foliage to
pasture the mules and the cows?
Last eve, I rode over the mountains; your
brother, my guide,
Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles that
offered, each side,
Their fruit-balls, black, glossy, and luscious,
—or strip from the sorbs
A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous, those
hairy gold orbs!
But my mule picked his sure sober path out,
just stopping to neigh
When he recognised down in the valley his
mates on their way
With the faggots and barrels of water. And
soon we emerged
From the plain where the woods could
scarce follow; and still, as we urged
Our way, the woods wondered, and left us.
Up, up still we trudged,
Though the wild path grew wilder each in-
stant, and place was e'en grudged
Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose
stones like the loose broken teeth
Of some monster which climbed there to
die, from the ocean beneath—
Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-
weed that clung to the path,
And dark rosemary ever a-dying, that, 'spite
the wind's wrath,
So loves the salt rock's face to seaward: and lentisks as staunch

To the stone where they root and bear
berries : and . . . what shows a branch
Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets of
pale seagreen leaves ;
Over all trod my mule with the caution of
gleaners o'er sheaves.
Still, foot after foot like a lady, still, round
after round,
He climbed to the top of Calvano : and God's
own profound
Was above me, and round me the mountains,
and under, the sea,
And within me my heart to bear witness
what was and shall be.
Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal ! no ram-
part excludes
Your eye from the life to be lived in the blue
solitudes.
Oh, those mountains, their infinite move-
ment ! still moving with you ;
For, ever some new head and breast of them
thrusts into view
To observe the intruder ; you see it, if
quickly you turn
And, before they escape you, surprise them.
They grudge you should learn
How the soft plains they look on, lean over
and love (they pretend)
—Cower beneath them, the black sea-pine
crouches, the wild fruit-trees bend,
E'en the myrtle leaves curl, shrink and shut :
all is silent and grave :
'T is a sensual and timorous beauty,—how
fair ! but a slave.

So, I turned to the sea; and there slumbered, as greenly as ever
Those isles of the siren, your Galli. No ages can sever
The Three, nor enable their sister to join them,—halfway
On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—no farther to-day!
Tho' the small one, just launched in the waves, watches breast-high and steady
From under the rock her bold sister, swum halfway already.
Fortù, shall we sail there together, and see, from the sides,
Quite new rocks show their faces, new haunts where the siren abides?
Shall we sail round and round them, close over the rocks, tho' unseen,
That ruffle the grey glassy water to glorious green?
Then scramble from splinter to splinter, reach land, and explore,
On the largest, the strange square black turret with never a door,
Just a loop to admit the quick lizards? Then, stand there and hear
The birds' quiet singing, that tells us what life is, so clear?
—The secret they sang to Ulysses when, ages ago,
He heard and he knew this life's secret, I hear and I know.

Ah, see! the sun breaks o'er Calvana.
He strikes the great gloom
And flutters it o'er the mount's summit in
airy gold fume.
All is over. Look out, see, the gipsy, our
tinker and smith,
Has arrived, set up bellows and forge, and
down-squatted forthwith
To his hammering under the wall there!
One eye keeps aloof,
The urchins that itch to be putting his jews'-
harp to proof,
While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,
is watching how sleek
Shines the hog, come to share in the wind-
fall. Chew, abbot's own cheek!
All is over. Wake up and come out now,
and down let us go,
And see the fine things got in order at church
for the show
Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening. To-
morrow 's the Feast
Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means of Vir-
gins the least:
As you 'll hear in the off-hand discourse
which (all nature, no art)
The Dominican brother, these three weeks,
was getting by heart.
Not a pillar nor post but is dizened with red
and blue papers;
All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar
a-blaze with long tapers.

But the great masterpièce is the scaffold
rigged glorious to hold
All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers and
trumpeters bold
Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber: who, when
the priest's hoarse,
Will strike us up something that's brisk for
the feast's second course.
And then will the flaxen-wigged Image be
carried in pomp
Thro' the plain, while, in gallant procession,
the priests mean to stomp.
All round the glad church lie old bottles with
gunpowder stopped,
Which will be, when the Image re-enters,
religiously popped.
And at night from the crest of Calvano great
bonfires will hang:
On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,
and more poppers bang.
At all events, come—to the garden, as far
as the wall;
See me tap with a hoe on the plaster, till out
there shall fall
A scorpion with wide angry nippers!

—"Such trifles!" you say?
Fortù, in my England at home, men meet
gravely to-day
And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws be right-
eous and wise!
—If't were proper, Scirocco should vanish
in black from the skies!

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY.

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY.)

I

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to here, at least!
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

III

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain edge as bare as the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned wool.

IV

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd,—there's something to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

V

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,
'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the heights:
You 've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive-trees.

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You 've summer all at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers well,

The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out
its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the
children to pick and sell.

VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fount-
ain to spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the
shine such foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that
prance and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty
gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds
round her waist in a sort of sash.

VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see
though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's
lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i'
the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of
it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stun-
ning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine
round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the
months of the fever and chill.

IX

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the
blessed church-bells begin :
No sooner the bells leave off than the dili-
gence rattles in :
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you
never a pin.
By and by there 's the travelling doctor gives
pills, lets blood, draws teeth ;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the
market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture—the
new play, piping hot !
And a notice how, only this morning, three
liberal thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most
fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion,
some little new law of the Duke's !
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the
Reverend Don So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, St. Jerome
and Cicero,
" And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhym-
ing,) " the skirts of St. Paul has reached,
" Having preached us those six Lent-lect-
ures more unctuous than ever he
preached."
Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession !
our Lady borne smiling and smart,
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and
seven swords stuck in her heart !

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it 's the greatest pleasure in life.

X

But bless you, it 's dear—it 's dear! fowls, wine, at double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays passing the gate
It 's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still —ah, the pity, the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow candles;
One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals:
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

PICTOR IGNOTUS.

FLORENCE, 15—.

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar

Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes!
—Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night, with all my gift
Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk
To the centre, of an instant; or around
Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan
The license and the limit, space and bound,
Allowed to truth made visible in man.
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,
Over the canvas could my hand have flung,
Each face obedient to its passion's law,
Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue.
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place;
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—
O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?
What did ye give me that I have not saved?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,

As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South, or North,
Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,
Through old streets named afresh from the event,
Till it reached home, where learned age should greet
My face, and youth, the star not yet distinct
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
With love about, and praise, till life should end,
And then not go to heaven, but linger here,
Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,
The thought grew frightful, 't was so wildly dear!
But a voice changed it. Glimpses of such sights
Have scared me, like the revels through a door
Of some strange house of idols at its rites!
This world seemed not the world it was, before.
Mixed with my loving trusting ones, there trooped

. . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun
To press on me and judge me? Though I stooped
Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . enough!
These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,
And where they live needs must our pictures live
And see their faces, listen to their prate,
Partakers of their daily pettiness,
Discussed of,—"This I love, or this I hate,
"This likes me more, and this affects me less!"
Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles,
With the same series, Virgin, Babe, and Saint,
With the same cold calm beautiful regard,—
At least no merchant traffics in my heart;
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward
Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart;
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine
While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,

'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
So, die my pictures! surely, gently die!
O youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth?
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?
Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

FRA LIPPO LIPPI.

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave.
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what 's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, 't is past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine 's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that 's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters? Then you 'll take
Your hand away that 's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend

Three streets off—he 's a certain . . . how
d 'ye call?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you 're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner, nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net?
He 's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I' m not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me
(And many more beside, lads! more beside!)
And all 's come square again. I 'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!

It 's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I 'm the painter, since you style me so,
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down.
You know them, and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let 's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here 's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I 've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song,—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim shapes.

And a face that looked up . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That 's all I 'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Lawrence, hail fellow, well met,—
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
And so, as I was stealing back again,
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—
Mine 's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting 's in that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum 's the word naturally; but a monk!
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,

Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand
(Its fellow was a stinger, as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
"So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father
Wiping his own mouth, 't was refection-time,—
"To quit this very miserable world?
"Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?" thought I;
By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'T was not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let 's see what the urchin 's fit for"—that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.

Such a to-do! They tried me with their books:
Lord, they 'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is, "Amo" I love!
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use:
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,

Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.
"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d' ye say?
"In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
"What if at last we get our man of parts,
"We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
"And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine
"And put the front on it that ought to be!"
And hereupon he bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folks at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard, and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)

Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling) prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried, "'T is ask and have;
"Choose, for more 's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,—"That 's the very man!
"Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
"That woman 's like the Prior's niece who comes
"To care about his asthma: it 's the life!"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked;
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. "How! what 's here?
"Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
"Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
"As much as pea and pea! it 's devil's game!
"Your business is not to catch men with show,

"With homage to the perishable clay,
"But lift them over it, ignore it all,
"Make them forget there 's such a thing as flesh.
"Your business is to paint the souls of men—
"Man's soul, and it 's a fire, smoke . . no, it 's not . .
"It 's vapour done up like a new-born babe—
"(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
"It 's . . well, what matters talking, it 's the soul!
"Give us no more of body than shows soul!
"Here 's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
"That sets up praising,—why not stop with him!
"Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
"With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?
"Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
"Rub all out, try at it a second time!
"Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
"She 's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
"Who went and danced, and got men's heads cut off!
"Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body

So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow 's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks nought.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I 've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them three-fold?
Or say there 's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That 's somewhat: and you 'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
"Rub all out!" Well, well, there 's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I 'm grown a man no doubt, I 've broken bounds:

You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I 'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
Lord, it 's fast holding by the rings in front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—"It 's art's decline, my son!
"You 're not of the true painters, great and old;
"Brother Angelico 's the man, you 'll find;
"Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:
"Fag on at flesh, you 'll never make the third!"
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I 'll stick to mine!
I 'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they 're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do, and sometimes don't;
For, doing most, there 's pretty sure to come

A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(*Flower o' the peach,*
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life 's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have? Do they like grass or no—
May they or may n't they? all I want 's the thing
Settled for ever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught:
I always see the garden, and God there
A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me: I 'm a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star 's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We 've a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
His name is Guidi—he 'll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he 'll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what 's sure to follow. You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you 're my man, you 've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!
For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What 's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works—paint any one, and count it crime

To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
"Are here already ; nature is complete :
"Suppose you reproduce her—(which you
can't)
There 's no advantage ! you must beat her,
then."
For, don't you mark? we 're made so that
we love
First when we see them painted, things we
have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see ;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given
for that ;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed,
now,
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though ! How
much more
If I drew higher things with the same truth !
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you ! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves ! This world 's no blot
for us
Nor blank ; it means intensely, and means
good :
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
"Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer !"
Strikes in the Prior : "when your meaning 's
plain
"It does not say to folks—remember matins,

"Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or, what 's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a St. Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold 's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—
"Already not one phiz of your three slaves
"Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
"But 's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
"The pious people have so eased their own
"With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
"We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
"Expect another job this time next year,
"For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
"Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

That is—you 'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
It 's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece

. . . There 's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns!
They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to church at midsummer.
And then i' the front, of course a saint or two—
St. John, because he saves the Florentines,
St. Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz, (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience.) Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed, motionless and moon-struck—I 'm the man!
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where 's a hole, where 's a corner for escape?

Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"
—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
"He made you and devised you, after all,
"Though he's none of you! Could St. John there, draw—
"His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?
"We come to brother Lippo for all that,
"*Iste perfecit opus!*" So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights!
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me! There's the grey beginning. Zooks!

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

But do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia! bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual: and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window, with your hand in mine,
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine, the man's bared breast she curls inside.

Don't count the time lost, neither; you
must serve
For each of the five pictures we require:
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
—How could you ever prick those perfect
ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no
less.
You smile? why, there's my picture ready
made,
There 's what we painters call our har-
mony!
A common greyness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That 's gone, you know)—but I, at every
point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned
down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There 's the bell clinking from the chapel-
top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days de-
crease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape,

As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber, for example—turn your head—
All that 's behind us! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak:
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such things should be:
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week;
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 't is easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies, that 's long past:
I do what many dream of, all their lives,
—Dream? strive to do, and agonise to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such

On twice your fingers, and not leave this
town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others
strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone
says,
(I know his name, no matter)—so much
less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-
up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to
prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand
of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but them-
selves, I know
Reach many a time a heaven that 's shut to
me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the
world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a
word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it
boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's
blame

Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what 's a heaven for? All is silver-grey,
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain;
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
"Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
Yonder 's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
('T is copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—

Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
"The present by the future, what is that?
"Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!
"Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"
I might have done it for you. So it seems:
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Beside, incentive comes from the soul's self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
For me, 't is safer, if the award be strict,

That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?

And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
'T is done and passed; 't was right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey:
And I 'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was, to have ended there; then, if
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
"The Roman's is the better when you pray,
"But still the other's Virgin was his wife—"
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)

"Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
"Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
"Who, were he set to plan and execute
"As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
"Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,—
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance so lost,—
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,

Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work 's my ware, and what 's it worth?
I 'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough

To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What 's better and what 's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there 's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—

Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the tree first without a wife,
While I have mine ! So—still they overcome
Because there 's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle ! Go, my Love.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH.

ROME, 15—.

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity !
Draw round my bed : is Anselm keeping back ?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not ! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !
What 's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world 's a dream.
Life, how and what is it ? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask

"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church of peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit on the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aëry dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam 's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!

My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten figleaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say, basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'T was ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan

Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'T is jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There 's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That 's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Upian serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,

I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point;
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount.
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze.
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude

To death: ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

I

Oh Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 't is with such a heavy mind!

II

Here you come with your old music, and here 's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?

III

Ay, because the sea 's the street there; and
't is arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it,
where they kept the carnival:
I was never out of England—it 's as if I saw
it all.

IV

Did young people take their pleasure when
the sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burn-
ing ever to midday,
When they made up fresh adventures for the
morrow, do you say?

V

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round
and lips so red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a
bell-flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a
man might base his head?

VI

Well, and it was graceful of them: they 'd
break talk off and afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he, to
finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately
at the clavichord?

VII

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive,
sixths diminished, sigh on sigh,

Told them something? Those suspensions,
those solutions—"Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might
last! we can but try!"

VIII

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are
you still as happy?"—"Yes. And
you?"
—"Then, more kisses!"—"Did *I* stop
them, when a million seemed so few?"
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must
be answered to!

IX

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they
praised you, I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good
alike at grave and gay!
"I can always leave off talking when I hear
a master play!"

X

Then they left you for their plesaure: till in
due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some
with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where
they never see the sun.

XI

But when I sit down to reason, think to take
my stand nor swerve,

While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from
nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I
creep thro' every nerve.

XII

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking
where a house was burned:
"Dust and ashes, dead and done with,
Venice spent what Venice earned.
"The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a
soul can be discerned.

XIII

"Yours for instance: you know physics,
something of geology,
"Mathematics are your pastime; souls
shall rise in their degree;
"Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll
not die, it cannot be!

XIV

"As for Venice and her people, merely born
to bloom and drop,
"Here on earth they bore their fruitage,
mirth and folly were the crop:
"What of soul was left, I wonder, when the
kissing had to stop?

XV

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I
want the heart to scold.

Dear dead woman, with such hair, too—
what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I
feel chilly and grown old.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY.

I ONLY knew one poet in my life:
And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
A man of mark, to know next time you saw.
His very serviceable suit of black
Was courtly once and conscientious still,
And many might have worn it, though none
did:
The cloak, that somewhat shone and
showed the threads,
Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.
He walked, and tapped the pavement with
his cane,
Scenting the world, looking it full in face:
An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels,
They turned up, now, the alley by the church,
That leads no whither; now, they breathed
themselves
On the main promenade just at the wrong
time.
You'd come upon his scrutinising hat,
Making a peaked shade blacker than itself
Against the single window spared some
house

Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work,—
Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick
Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks
Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.
He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
The man who slices lemons into drink,
The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys
That volunteer to help him turn its winch.
He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,
And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.
He took such cognisance of men and things,
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw;
If any cursed a woman, he took note;
Yet stared at nobody,—you stared at him,
And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
He seemed to know you and expect as much.
So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loose,
It marked the shameful and notorious fact
We had among us, not so much a spy
As a recording chief-inquisitor,
The town's true master if the town but knew!
We merely kept a governor for form,
While this man walked about and took account

Of all thought, said and acted, then went
home,
And wrote it fully to our Lord the King
Who has an itch to know things, he knows
why,
And reads them in his bed-room of a night.
Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a
touch,
A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease,
As back into your mind the man's look came.
Stricken in years a little, such a brow
His eyes had to live under!—clear as flint
On either side o' the formidable nose
Curved, cut and coloured like an eagle's
claw.
Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate?
When altogether old B. disappeared
And young C. got his mistress,—was 't our
friend,
His letter to the King, that did it all?
What paid the bloodless man for so much
pains?
Our Lord the King has favourites manifold,
And shifts his ministry some once a month;
Our city gets new governors at whiles,—
But never word or sign, that I could hear,
Notified, to this man about the streets,
The King's approval of those letters conned
The last thing duly at the dead of night.
Did the man love his office? Frowned our
Lord,
Exhorting when none heard—"Beseech me
not!

"Too far above my people,—beneath me!
"I set the watch,—how should the people know?
"Forget them, keep me all the more in mind!"
Was some such understanding 'twixt the two?

I found no truth in one report at least—
That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes
Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,
You found he ate his supper in a room
Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall,
And twenty naked girls to change his plate!
Poor man, he lived another kind of life
In that new stuccoed third house by the bridge,
Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise!
The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,
Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back.
Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
(Jacynth you're sure her name was) o'er the cheese
And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears,
Or treat of radishes in April. Nine,
Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was,
Would point him out to me a dozen times;

"St—St," he 'd whisper, "the Corregidor!"
I had been used to think that personage
Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,
And feathers like a forest in his hat,
Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,
Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,
And memorised the miracle in vogue!
He had a great observance from us boys •
We were in error; that was not the man.

I 'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,
To have just looked, when this man came to die,
And seen who lined the clean gay garret sides,
And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,
With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.
Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,
Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death,
Doing the King's work all the dim day long,
In his old coat and up to knees in mud,
Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust,—
And, now the day was won, relieved at once!
No further show or need of that old coat,
You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all the while
How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I!

A second, and the angels alter that.
Well, I could never write a verse,—could you?
Let 's to the Prado and make the most of time.

PROTUS.

Among these latter busts we count by scores,
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,
Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast—,
One loves a baby face, with violets there,
Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. "Protus ends a period
"Of empery beginning with a god:
"Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant,
"Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant;
"And if he quickened breath there, 't would like fire
"Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.
"A fame that he was missing, spread afar:
"The world, from its four corners, rose in war,
"Till he was borne out on a balcony
"To pacify the world when it should see.

"The captains ranged before him, one, his hand
"Made baby points at, gained the chief command.
"And day by day more beautiful he grew
"In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,
"While young Greek sculptors gazing on the child
"Became, with old Greek sculpture, reconciled.
"Already sages laboured to condense
"In easy tomes a life's experience:
"And artists took grave counsel to impart
"In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art,
"And make his graces prompt as blossoming
"Of plentifully-watered palms in spring:
"Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,
"For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,
"And morals love the letters of his name."

—Stop! Have you turned two pages? Still the same.
New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say
How that same year, on such a month and day,
"John the Pannonian, groundedly believed
"A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved

"The Empire from its fate the year be
fore,—
"Came, had a mind to take the crown, and
wore
"The same for six years, (during which
the Huns
"Kept off their fingers from us) till his sons
"Put something in his liquor"—and so forth.
Then a new reign. Stay—"Take at its just
worth"
(Subjoins an annotator) "what I give
"As hearsay. Some think, John let Protus
live
"And slip away. 'T is said, he reached
man's age
"At some blind northern court; made, first
a page,
"Then tutor to the children; last, of use
"About the hunting stables. I deduce
"He wrote the little tract 'On worming
dogs,'
"Whereof the name in sundry catalogues
"Is extant yet. A Protus of the race
"Is rumoured to have died a monk in
Thrace,—
"And, if the same, he reached senility."

Here's John the Smith's rough-hammered
head. Great eye,
Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite
can
To give you the crown-grasper. What a
man!

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA.

I

Hist, but a word, fair and soft!
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
Answer the question I 've put you so oft:
What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?
See, we 're alone in the loft,—

II

I, the poor organist here,
Hugues, the composer of note
Dead though, and done with, this many a year:
Let 's have a colloquy, something to quote,
Make the world prick up its ear!

III

See, the church empties apace:
Fast they extinguish the lights,
Hallo there, sacristan! Five minutes' grace!
Here 's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
Baulks one of holding the base.

IV

See, our huge house of the sounds,
Hushing its hundreds at once,
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds!
—O you may challenge them, not a response
Get the church-saints on their rounds!

V

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt
—March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
Put rats and mice to the rout—

VI

Aloys and Jurien and Just—
Order things back to their place,
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-lace,
Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

VII

Here 's your book, younger folks shelve!
Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
Here 's what should strike, could one handle it cunningly:
Help the axe, give it a helve!

VIII

Page after page as I played,
Every bar's rest, where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,
O' er my three claviers, you forest of pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX

Sure you were wishful to speak,
You, with brow ruled like a score,
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
Like two great breves, as they wrote them of yore.
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

X

Sure you said—"Good, the mere notes!
"Still, couldst thou take my intent,
"Know what procured me our Company's votes—
"A master were lauded and sciolists shent,
"Parted the sheep from the goats!"

XI

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
Quick, ere my candle 's a snuff
—Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch—
I believe in you, but that 's not enough:
Give my conviction a clinch!

XII

First you deliver your phrase
—Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—
Answered no less, where no answer needs be:
Off start the Two on their ways.

XIII

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help;

In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
So the cry 's open, the kennel 's a-yelp,
Argument 's hot to the close.

XIV

One dissertates, he is candid;
Two must discept,—has distinguished;
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did;
Four protests; Five makes a dart at the thing wished:
Back to One, goes the case bandied.

XV

One says his say with a difference;
More of expounding, explaining!
All now is wrangle, abuse and vociferance;
Now there 's a truce, all 's subdued, self-restraining:
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI

One is incisive, corrosive;
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant;
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive;
Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant:
Five . . O Danaides, O Sieve!

XVII

Now, they ply axes and crowbars;
Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

XVIII

Est fuga, volvitur rota.
On we drift: where looms the dim port?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota;
Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

XIX

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All 's like . . . . it 's like . . . . for an instance I'm trying . . .
There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying!

XX

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till we exclaim—"But where 's music, the dickens?
"Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens
"—Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"

XXI

I for man's effort am zealous:
Prove me such censure unfounded!
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—
Hopes 't was for something, his organ pipes sounded
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

XXII

Is it your moral of Life?
Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife?

XXIII

Over our heads truth and nature—
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature—
God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath man's usurpature.

XXIV

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
Cherub and trophy and garland;
Nothings grow something which quietly closes
Heaven's earnest eye: not a glimpse of the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV

Ah but traditions, inventions,
(Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions,
Down the past ages, must know more than this age!
Leave me the web its dimensions!

XXVI

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
Proved a mere mountain in labour?
Better submit; try again; what 's the clef?
'Faith, 't is no trifle for pipe and for tabor—
Four flats, the minor in F.

XXVII

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:
Learning it once, who would lose it?
Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
Truth 's golden o'er us although we refuse it—
Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

XXVIII

Hugues! I advise *meâ pænâ*
(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!
Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,
Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

XXIX

While in the roof, if I 'm right there,
. . . Lo you, the wick in the socket!
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,

And find a poor devil has ended his cares
At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

ABT VOGLER.

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORISING UPON THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF HIS INVENTION.)

I

Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed
Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
Man, brute, reptile fly,—alien of end and of aim,
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed,—
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved!

II

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise!

Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now combine,
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

III

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion he was,
Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest:
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in sight.

IV

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match man's birth,

Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky:
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found, but fixed its wandering star;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor far.

V

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and glow,
Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow,
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth their new:
What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon;
And what is,—shall I say, matched both? for I was made perfect too.

VI

All through my keys that gave their sounds
to a wish of my soul,
All through my soul that praised as its
wish flowed visibly forth,
All through music and me! For think, had
I painted the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the
process so wonder-worth.
Had I written the same, made verse—still,
effect proceeds from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear
how the tale is told;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience
to laws,
Painter and poet are proud, in the artist-
list enrolled:—

VII

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the
will that can,
Existent behind all laws: that made them,
and, lo, they are!
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be
allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a
fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in
itself is nought;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft,
and all is said:

Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought,
And, there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head!

VIII

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;
Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.
Never to be again! But many more of the kind
As good, nay, better perchance: is this your comfort to me?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay, what was, shall be.

IX

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;

The evil is null, is nought, is silence
implying sound;
What was good, shall be good, with, for
evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the
heaven, a perfect round.

X

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of
good, shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty,
nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each sur-
vives for the melodist,
When eternity affirms the conceptions of
an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic
for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose
itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and
the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall
hear it by-and-by.

XI

And what is our failure here but a triumph's
evidence
For the fulness of the days? Have we
withered or agonised?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that
singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in, but that har-
mony should be prized?

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome; 't is we musicians know.

XII

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep:
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

I

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

II

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalised me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III

Help me to hold it! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

IV

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal: and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope,
I traced it. Hold it fast!

V

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
And everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers!

VII

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

VIII

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

IX

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part, my part
In life, for good and ill.

X

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

XI

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, wherever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

XII

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again.
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

"DE GUSTIBUS—"

I

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If your lovers remain)
In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hard, those two in the hazel coppice—
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
Making love, say,—
The happier they!
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
With the beanflower's boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

II

What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther South,
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
And one sharp tree—'t is a cypress—stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
(When fortune's malice
Lost her, Calais)
Open your heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she:
So it always was, so shall ever be.

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

A PICTURE AT FANO.

I

Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, may'st see another child for tending,
Another still to quiet and retrieve.

II

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze.
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

III

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opens, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

IV

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V

How soon all wordly wrong would be repaired!
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.

O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:
And knowing this is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared?

VI

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend!)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
—My angel with me too; and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent),

VIII

And since he did not work thus earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong—

I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

EVELYN HOPE.

I

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass;
Little has yet been changed, I think:
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

II

Sixteen years old when she died!
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;
It was not her time to love; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

IV

No, indeed! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love:
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delay it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time to come for taking you.

V

But the time will come, at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me:
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

VII

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!
My heart seemed full as it could hold;
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.
So hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep:
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!
There, that is our secret: go to sleep!
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

MEMORABILIA.

I

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems, and new!

II

But you were living before that,
  And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
  My starting moves your laughter!

III

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
  And a certain use in the world, no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
  'Mid the blank miles round about:

IV

For there I picked up on the heather
  And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
  Well, I forget the rest.

APPARENT FAILURE.

"We shall soon lose a celebrated building."
Paris Newspaper

No, for I'll save it! Seven years since,
  I passed through Paris, stopped a day
To see the baptism of your Prince;
  Saw, made my bow, and went my way.
Walking the heat and headache off,
  I took the Seine-side, you surmise,
Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,
  Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,
So sauntered till—what met my eyes?

II

Only the Doric little Morgue!
The dead-house where you show your drowned:
Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the Sorgue.
Your Morgue has made the Seine renowned.
One pays one's debt in such a case;
I plucked up heart and entered,—stalked,
Keeping a tolerable face
Compared with some whose cheeks were chalked:
Let them! No Briton 's to be baulked!

III

First came the silent gazers; next,
A screen of glass, we 're thankful for;
Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,
The three men who did most abhor
Their life in Paris yesterday,
So killed themselves: and now, enthroned
Each on his copper couch, they lay
Fronting me, waiting to be owned.
I thought, and think, their sin 's atoned.

IV

Poor men, God made, and all for that!
The reverence struck me; o'er each head
Religiously was hung its hat,
Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,
Sacred from touch: each had his berth,
His bounds, his proper place of rest,

Who last night tenanted on earth
Some arch, where twelve such slept abreast,—
Unless the plain asphalte seemed best.

V

How did it happen, my poor boy?
You wanted to be Buonaparte
And have the Tuileries for toy,
And could not, so it broke your heart.
You, old one by his side, I judge,
Were, red as blood, a socialist,
A leveller! Does the Empire grudge
You 've gained what no Republic missed!
Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

VI

And this—why, he was red in vain,
Or black,—poor fellow that is blue!
What fancy was it turned your brain?
Oh, women were the prize for you!
Money gets women, cards and dice
Get money, and ill-luck gets just
The copper couch and one clear nice
Cool squirt of water o'er your bust
The right thing to extinguish lust!

VII

It 's wiser being good than bad;
It 's safer being meek than fierce:
It 's fitter being sane than mad.
My own hope *is*, a sun will pierce

The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

PROSPICE.

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle 's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,

Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's
arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the
brave,
The black minute 's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that
rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out
of pain.
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee
again,
And with God be the rest!

"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME."

(See Edgar's song in "LEAR.")

I

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and
scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained
thereby.

II

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travellers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladnesss that some end might be.

IV

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring,—
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

V

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fallen no grieving can amend;")

VI

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves:
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band"—to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now—should I be fit?

VIII

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 't was gone; grey plain all round:
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on; nought else remained to do.

X

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove!
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You 'd think; a burr had been a treasure trove.

XI

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. "See

"Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
"It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
"'T is the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
"Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

XII

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to baulk
All hope of greenness? 't is a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there:
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

XIV

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
I never saw a brute I hated so;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

XV

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art:
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

XVI

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

XVII

Giles then, the soul of honour—there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

XVIII

Better this present than a past like that;
Back therefore to my darkening path again!
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

XIX

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

XX

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

XXI

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
—It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

XXIV

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

XXV

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,

Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood—
Bog, clay, and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

XXVI

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil 's
Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII

And just as far as ever from the end,
Nought in the distance but the evening, nought
To point my footsteps further! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

XXVIII

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains—with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me,—solve it, you!
How to get from them was no clearer case.

XXIX

Yet half I seemed to recognise some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when—
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts—you 're inside the den.

XXX

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on the right,
Couched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight,
While, to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight!

XXXI

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

XXXII

Not see? because of night perhaps?—why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—
"Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!"

XXXIII

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture ! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew *"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."*

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN EUROPE.

Let us begin and carry up this corpse,
Singing together.
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,
Each in its tether
Sleeping safe in the bosom of the plain,
Cared-for till cock-crow :
Look out if yonder be not day again
Rimming the rock-row !
That 's the appropriate country ; there, man's thought,
Rarer, intenser,
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer.

Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;
Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
Crowded with culture!
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
Clouds overcome it;
No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's
Circling its summit.
Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights
Wait ye the warning?
Our low life was the level's and the night's:
He 's for the morning.
Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
'Ware the beholders!
This is our master, famous, calm and dead,
Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft
Safe from the weather!
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
Singing together,
He was a man born with thy face and throat,
Lyric Apollo!
Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note
Winter would follow?
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
Cramped and diminished,
Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!

"My dance is finished?"
No, that's the world's way; (keep the mountain-side,
Make for the city!)
He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
Over men's pity;
Left play for work, and grappled with the world
Bent on escaping:
"What 's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled?
"Show me their shaping,
"Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,—
"Give!"—So, he gowned him,
Straight got by heart that book to its last page:
Learned, we found him.
Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
Accents uncertain:
"Time to taste life," another would have said,
"Up with the curtain!"
This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?
"Patience a moment!
"Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
"Still there 's the comment.
"Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,

"Painful or easy!
"Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
"Ay, nor feel queasy."
Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
When he had learned it,
When he had gathered all books had to give!
Sooner, he spurned it.
Image the whole, then execute the parts—
Fancy the fabric
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here 's the town-gate reached; there 's the market-place
Gaping before us.)
Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
(Hearten our chorus!)
That before living he 'd learn how to live—
No end to learning:
Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
Use for our earning.
Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes!
"Live now or never!"
He said, "What 's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
"Man has Forever."
Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:
Calculus racked him:
Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:
Tussis attacked him.

"Now, master, take a little rest!"—not he!
(Caution redoubled!
Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly!)
Not a whit troubled,
Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon
He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
Sucked at the flagon.
Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure
Bad is our bargain!
Was it not great? did not he throw on God
(He loves the burthen)—
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?
Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment.
He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure:
"Wilt thou trust death or not?" He answered "Yes!
"Hence with life's pale lure!"
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred 's soon hit:

This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him.
So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;
Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—
Properly based *Oun*—
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.
Well, here 's the platform, here 's the proper place:
Hail to your purlieus,
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!
Here 's the top-peak; the multitude below
Live, for they can, there:
This man decided not to Live but Know—
Bury this man there?
Here—here 's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,
Peace let the dew send!
Lofty designs must close in like effects:

Loftily lying,
Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying.

CLEON.

"As certain also of your own poets have said"—

Cleon the poet, (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps "Greece"—
To Protus in his Tyranny : much health !

They give thy letter to me, even now :
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unlades
Gift after gift ; they block my court at last
And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee ;
And one white she-slave, from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves)
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands

Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life:
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,—
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work, 'mid good acclaim,
Climbed with the eye, to cheer the architect,—
Did'st ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake:
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,
Thou first of men mightst look out to the East:
The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the sun!
For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak
Thy great words and describe thy royal face—

Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most,
Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.
It is as thou hast heard: in one short life
I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine, and also mine the little chant
So sure to rise from every fishing bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their net.
The image of the sun-god on the phare,
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine;
The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too,
I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before;
And I have written three books on the soul,
Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.
For music,—why, I have combined the moods,
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;
Thus much the people know and recognise,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not!
We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great, beside their simple way,
To a judge who only sees one way at once,

One mind-point and no other at a time,—
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way—not ours, nor meant for ours;
And ours is greater, had we skill to know.
For, what we call this life of men on earth,
This sequence of the soul's achievements here,
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
But each part having reference to all,—
How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
Endure effacement by another part?
Was the thing done?—then, what's to do again?
See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,
Making at last a picture; there it lies.
So first the perfect separate forms were made,
The portions of mankind; and after, so,
Occurred the combination of the same.
For where had been a progress, otherwise?
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
In such a synthesis the labour ends.
Now mark me! those divine men of old time

Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one
point
The outside verge that rounds our faculty ;
And where they reached, who can do more
than reach?
It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a sphere,
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
In due succession : but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch
The whole circumference of that emptied
sphere,
Fills it more fully than the water did ;
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
Resolved into a subtler element.
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height—and after, void ;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to
Zeus
To vindicate his purpose in our life :
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction
out,
That he or other god descended here
And, once for all, showed simultaneously
What, in its nature, never can be shown
Piecemeal or in succession : showed, I say,
The worth both absolute and relative
Of all his children from the birth of time,
His instruments for all appointed work.
I now go on to image—might we hear

The judgment which should give the due
to each,
Show where the labour lay and where the
ease,
And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere!
This is a dream :—but no dream, let us hope,
That years and days, the summers and the
springs,
Follow each other with unwaning powers.
The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer
far
Through culture, than the wild wealth of the
rock ;
The suave plum than the savage-tasted
drupe ;
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet ;
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn
flowers :
That young and tender crescent moon, thy
slave,
Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,
Refines upon the women of my youth.
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?
I have not changed verse like Homer, no—
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor
carved
And painted men like Phidias and his friend :
I am not great as they are, point by point.
But I have entered into sympathy
With these four, running these into one
soul,
Who, separate, ignored each other's arts.
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?

The wild flower was the larger ; I have dashed
Rose-blood from its petals, pricked its cup's
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
And show a better flower if not so large :
I stand myself. Refer this to the gods
Whose gift alone it is ! which, shall I dare
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
Discourse of lightly or depreciate ?
It might have fallen to another's hand : what then ?
I pass too surely : let at least truth stay !

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
This being with me, as I declare, O king,
My works in all these varicoloured kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men—
Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life ?
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand :
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men ? "For" (writest thou)
"Thou leaveth much behind, while I leave nought.
"Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
"The pictures men shall study ; while my life,
"Complete and whole now in its power and joy,
"Dies altogether with my brain and arm,

"Is lost indeed; since, what survives myself?
"The brazen statue to o'erlook my grave,
"Set on the promontory which I named.
"And that—some supple courtier of my heir
"Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps
"To fix the robe to, which best drags it down.
"I go then: triumph thou, who dost not go!"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
That admiration grows as knowledge grows?
That imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time?
If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, nay perceived,
Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man, her last, appeared upon the stage—
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
The perfectness of others yet unseen.
Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee
"Shall I go on a step, improve on this,
"Do more for visible creatures than is done?"
Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each
"Grow conscious in himself—by that alone

"All 's perfect else : the shell sucks fast the rock,
"The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
"And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take flight,
"Till life's mechanics can no further go—
"And all this joy in natural life, is put,
"Like fire from off thy finger into each,
"So exquisitely perfect is the same.
"But 't is pure fire, and they mere matter are :
"It has them, not they it ; and so I choose
"For man, thy last premeditated work
"(If I might add a glory to the scheme)
"That a third thing should stand apart from both,
"A quality arise within his soul,
"Which, intro-active, made to supervise
"And feel the force it has, may view itself,
"And so be happy." Man might live at first
The animal life : but is there nothing more?
In due time, let him critically learn
How he lives ; and, the more he gets to know
Of his own life's adaptabilities,
The more joy-giving will his life become.
Thus man, who hath this quality, is best

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said :
"Let progress end at once,—man make no step
"Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
"Using his senses, not the sense of sense!"

In man there 's failure, only since he left
The lower and inconscious forms of life.
We called it in advance, the rendering plain
Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,
And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head.
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to ;
A tower that crowns a country. But alas,
The soul now climbs it just to perish there !
For thence we have discovered ('t is no dream—
We know this, which we had not else perceived)
That there 's a world of capability
For joy spread round about us, meant for us,
Inviting us ; and still the soul craves all,
And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot more
"Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad !
"Nay, so much less as that fatigue has brought
"Deduction to it." We struggle, fain to enlarge
Our bounded physical recipiency,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness : no,
It skills not ! life 's inadequate to joy,
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.
They praise a fountain in my garden here

Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow
Thin from her tube ; she smiles to see it rise.
What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills shut up,
And mock her with my leave to take the same?
The artificer has given her one small tube
Past power to widen or exchange—what boots
To know she might spout oceans if she could?
She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread:
And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast
"See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
"That I may be still happier—for thy use!"
If this were so, we could not thank our lord,
As hearts beat on to doing : 't is not so—
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?
Still, no. If care—where is the sign? I ask,
And get no answer, and agree in sum,
O king, with thy profound discouragement,
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
Most progress is most failure : thou sayest well.

The last point now. Thou dost accept a case—
Holding joy not impossible to one
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I
Who leave behind me living works indeed;
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is

(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living?—Otherwise
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—
Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?
Methinks I 'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:
But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there,
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes: thy fair slave's an ode.
I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
For being beloved: she turns to that young man,
The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
I know the joy of kingship: well, thou art king!
"But," sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,
To find thee tripping on a mere word) "what

"Thou writest, paintest, stays ; that does not die :
"Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
"And Æschylus, because we read his plays !"
Why, if they live still, let them come and take
Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup,
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive ?
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen ;
While every day my hair falls more and more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—
The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape,
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over-much,
Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,

—To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us:
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
On purpose to make prized the life at large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,
We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But no!
Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
He must have done so, were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought die,
Glad for what was! Farewell. And for the rest,
I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus; we have heard his fame
Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us?
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all!
He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ;

And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.

INSTANS TYRANNUS.

I

Of the million or two, more or less,
I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

II

I struck him, he grovelled of course—
For, what was his force?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate;
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
As his lot might be worse.

III

"Were the object less mean, would he stand
"At the swing of my hand!
"For obscurity helps him, and blots
"The hole where he squats."
So, I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw,
Still he couched there perdue;
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,

Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilth:
Still he kept to his filth.

IV

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press:
Just a son or a mother to seize!
No such booty as these.
Were it simply a friend to pursue
'Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me, in person or pelf,
What he owes me himself!
No: I could not but smile through my chafe:
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
—Through minuteness, to wit.

V

Then a humour more great took its place
At the thought of his face:
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth
'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
To put out of its pain.
And "no!" I admonished myself,
"Is one mocked by an elf,
"Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
"The gravamen 's in that!
"How the lion, who crouches to suit
"His back to my foot,
"Would admire that I stand in debate!
"But the small turns the great

"If it vexes you,—that is the thing!
"Toad or rat vex the king?
"Though I waste half my realm to unearth
"Toad or rat, 't is well worth!"

VI

So, I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole, with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake;
Over-head, did my thunder combine
With my under-ground mine:
Till I looked from my labour content
To enjoy the event.

VII

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say "without friend?"
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest!
Do you see! Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
—So, *I* was afraid!

AN EPISTLE.

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from his mouth, man's soul)
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—
And aptest in contrivance (under God)
To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)
Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer still.
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
On many a flinty furlong of this land.
Also, the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hitherward:
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear:
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
And once a town declared me for a spy;
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
A man with plague-sores at the third degree
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here!
'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
A viscid choler is observable
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say;
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
Than our school wots of: there 's a spider here
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back;

Take five and drop them . . . but who knows
his mind,
The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to?
His service payeth me a sublimate
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,
There set in order my experiences,
Gather what most deserves, and give thee
all—
Or I might add, Judæa's gum-tragacanth
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-
grained,
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy:
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at
Zoar—
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay! my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
Protesteth his devotion is my price—
Suppose I write what harms not, though he
steal?
I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
What set me off a-writing first of all.
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!
For, be it this town's barrenness—or else
The Man had something in the look of
him—
His case has struck me far more than 't is
worth.
So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose,
In the great press of novelty at hand,

The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth?
The very man is gone from me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

'T is but a case of mania: subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days
When, by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art
Unknown to me and which 't were well to know,
The evil thing, out-breaking, all at once,
Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—
But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,
Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered might inscribe
Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly at that vintage, as it were,
(First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
The just-returned and new-established soul
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
That henceforth she will read or these or none.

And first—the man's own firm conviction rests
That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
—That he was dead and then restored to life
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:
—'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.
"Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.
Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,
Instead of giving way to time and health,
Should eat itself into the life of life,
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones, and all!
For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable,
As much, indeed, beyond the common health
As he were made and put aside to show.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep!
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?
This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—

He listened not except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.
And that's a sample how his years must go.
Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure,—can he use the same
With straitened habitude and tastes starved small,
And take at once to his impoverished brain
The sudden element that changes things,
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand,
And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—
Warily parsimonious, when no need,
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times?
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one:
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say,
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven:
The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—

'T is one! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt
With stupor at its very littleness,
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious imports, whole results;
And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes.
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
Preposterously, at cross purposes.
Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of the daily craft!
While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
At play or in the school or laid asleep,
Will startle him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like. Demand
The reason why—"'t is but a word," object—
"A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
Looked at us (dost thou mind?) when, being young,
We both would unadvisedly recite
Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
Thou and the child have each a veil alike
Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both

Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!
He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
(It is the life to lead perforcedly)
Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
The spiritual life around the earthly life:
The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
So is the man perplext with impulses
Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
"It should be" baulked by "here it cannot be."
And oft the man's soul springs into his face
As if he saw again and heard again
His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise.
Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within
Admonishes: then back he sinks at once
To ashes, who was very fire before,
In sedulous recurrence to his trade
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;
And studiously the humbler for that pride,
Professedly the faultier that he knows
God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly will—

Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
For that same death which must restore his being
To equilibrium, body loosening soul
Divorced even now by premature full growth
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
So long as God please, and just how God please.
He even seeketh not to please God more
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do:
How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
His own conviction? Ardent as he is—
Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
"Be it as God please" reassureth him.
I probed the sore as thy disciple should:
"How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness
"Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
"To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
"Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?"
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
The man is apathetic, you deduce?
Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
Able and weak, affects the very brutes
And birds—how say I? flowers of the field—

As a wise workman recognises tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they
make.
Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:
Only impatient, let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
An indignation which is promptly curbed:
As when in certain travel I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,
And happened to hear the land's practitioners
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my
peace!

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the
source,
Conferring with the frankness that befits?
Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
Perished in a tumult many years ago,
Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.
His death, which happened when the earth-
quake fell
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people—that's
their wont!

On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
How could he stop the earthquake? That's
their way!
The other imputations must be lies:
But take one, though I loath to give it thee,
In mere respect for any good man's fame.
(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad; should we count on what he
says?
Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech
'T is well to keep nothing back of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer, then,
As—God forgive me! who but God himself,
Creator and sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile,
—'Sayeth that such an one was born and
lived,
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his
own house,
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I
know,
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose
repeat,
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he
saith?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling at every moment for remark?
I noticed on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!
Nor I myself discern in what is writ
Good cause for the peculiar interest
And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus:
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold and menacing:
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
In this old sleepy town at unawares,
The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
To this ambiguous Syrian: he may lose,
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine;
Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice

Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
"Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
"Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine:
"But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
"And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS.

OR,

NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND.

"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."

['Will sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,
Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin,
And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,
And feels about his spine small eft-things course,
Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh:
And while above his head a pompion-plant,
Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,

Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,
And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch,—
He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams cross
And recross till they weave a spider-web,
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)
And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,
Touching that other, whom his dam called God.
Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know ! and time to vex is now,
When talk is safer than in winter-time.
Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep
In confidence he drudges at their task,
And it is good to cheat the pair, and gibe,
Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos !
'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,
But not the stars ; the stars came otherwise ;
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that :
Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
He hated that He cannot change His cold,
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine
O' the lazy sea, her stream thrusts far amid,
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave;
Only, she ever sickened, found repulse
At the other kind of water, not her life,
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun)
Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
And in her old bounds buried her despair,
Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,
Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;
Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown,
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye
By moonlight; and the pie with the long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
But will not eat the ants; the ants themselves

That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
About their hole—He made all these and more,
Made all we see, and us, in spite : how else?
He Himself could not make a second self
To be His mate : as well have made Himself :
He would not make what He mislikes or slights,
An eyesore to Him, or not worth His pains ;
But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
Make what Himself would fain, in a manner, be—
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,
Things He admires and mocks too,—that is it!
Because, so brave, sobetter though they be,
It nothing skills if He begin to plague.
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,
Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss,—
Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up all,
Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain ;
Last, throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.
Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay :
Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban

Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath wings,
And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire,
And there, a sting to do his foes offence,
There, and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns
Of grigs high up that make the merry din,
Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,
And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should laugh;
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again,—
Well, as the chance were, this might take or else
Not take my fancy: I might hear his cry,
And give the manikin three legs for one,
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,
And lessoned he was mine and merely clay.
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,
Making and marring clay at will? So He.

'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,
Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and Lord.
'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountain to the sea;
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.

'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;
'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end in red:
As it likes me each time, thus I do: So He.

Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,
But rougher than His handiwork, be sure!
Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,
And envieth that, so helped, such things do more
Than He who made them! What consoles but this?
That they, unless through Him, do nought at all,
And must submit: what other use in things?
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue:
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt:
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth
"I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
"I make the cry my maker cannot make

"With his great round mouth; he must blow through mine!"
Would not I smash it with my foot? So He.

But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease?
Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,
What knows,—the something over Setebos
That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought,
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing, perchance.
There may be something quiet o'er His head,
Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief,
Since both derive from weakness in some way.
I joy because the quails come; would not joy
Could I bring quails here when I have a mind:
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.
'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch,
But never spends much thought nor care that way.
It may look up, work up,—the worse for those
It works on! 'Careth but for Setebos
The many-handed as a cuttle-fish,
Who, making Himself feared through what He does,
Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar
To what is quiet and hath happy life;

Next looks down here, and out of very spite
Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,
These good things to match those, as hips do grape,—
'T is solace making baubles, ay, and sport.
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:
Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,
Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words;
Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's robe
The eyed skin of a supple ocelot;
And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling mole,
A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,
Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,
And saith she is Miranda and my wife.
'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane
He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge;
Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared,
Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,
And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge
In a hole o' the rock, and calls him Caliban;
A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.

'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taketh his mirth with make-believes : so He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all things
Which Setebos vexed only : 'holds not so.
Who made them weak, meant weakness He might vex.
Had He meant other, while His hand was in,
Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,
Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint,
Like an orc's armour? Ay,—so spoil His sport?
He is the One now : only He doth all.

'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits Him.
Ay, himself loves what does him good ; but why?
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,
But, had he eyes, would want no help, would hate
Or love, just as it liked him : He hath eyes.
Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,
By no means for the love of what is worked.
'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world
When all goes right, in this safe summer-time,

And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,
Than trying what to do with wit and strength.
'Falls to make something: 'piled yon pile of turfs,
And squared and stuck there squares of soft white chalk,
And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each,
And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,
And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,
Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.
No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake;
'Shall some day knock it down again: so He.
'Saith He is terrible: watch His feats in proof!
One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.
He hath a spite against me, that I know.
Just as He favours Prosper, who knows why?
So it is, all the same, as well I find.
'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them firm
With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises
Crawling to lay their eggs here: well, one wave,
Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,

Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large tongue,
And licked the whole labour flat: so much for spite!
'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it lies)
Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade:
Often they scatter sparkles: there is force!
'Dug up a newt He may have envied once
And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.
Please Him and hinder this?—What Prosper does?
Aha, if he would tell me how. Not He!
There is the sport: discover how or die!
All need not die, for of the things o' the isle
Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees;
Those at His mercy,—why, they please Him most
When . . when . . well, never try the same way twice!
Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow wroth.
You must not know His ways, and play Him off,
Sure oft the issue, 'Doth the like himself:
'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
But steals the nut from underneath my thumb,
And when I threat, bites stoutly in defence:
'Spareth an urchin that contrariwise,
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach: the two ways please.

But what would move my choler more than this,—
That either creature counted on its life
To-morrow, next day and all days to come,
Saying forsooth in the inmost of its heart,
"Because he did so yesterday with me,
"And otherwise with such another brute,
"So must he do henceforth and always."—Ay?
'Would teach the reasoning couple what "must" means!
'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord? So He.

'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps His strength: no change,
If He have done His best, make no new world
To please Him more, so leave off watching this,—
If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
Some strange day,—or, suppose, grow into it
As grubs grow butterflies: else, here are we,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all.

'Believeth with the life the pain shall stop.
His dam held different, held that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted friends:
Idly! He doth His worst in this our life,

Giving just respite lest we die through pain,
Saving last pain for worst,—with which, an end.
Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire
Is, not to seem too happy. Sees, himself,
Yonder two flies, with purple films and pink,
Bask on the pompion-bell above : kills both.
'Sees two black painful beetles roll their ball
On head and tail as if to save their lives :
'Moves them the stick away they strive to clear.

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive, suppose
This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
And always, above all else, envies Him ;
Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,
Moans in the sun, get under holes to laugh,
And never speaks his mind save housed as now :
Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,
O'erheard this speech, and asked "What chucklest at?"
'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
Or let the toothsome apple rot on tree,
Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste :
While myself lit a fire, and made a song
And sung it, "*What I hate, be consecrate*
"*To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate*
"*For Thee ; what see for envy in poor me?*"

Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,
Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,
That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch
And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

[What, what? A curtain o'er the world at once!
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird—or, yes,
There scuds His raven that hath told Him all!
It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The wind
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,
And fast invading fires begin! White blaze—
A tree's head snaps—and there, there, there, there, there
His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!
Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,
Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month
One little mess of whelks, so he may scape!]

SAUL.

I

Said Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I till, ere thou speak,
"Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
"Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent
"Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
"Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
"For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
"Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,
"To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
"And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

II

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew
"On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
"Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
"Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness: but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide

On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to each side ;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king serpent all heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noon-tide—those sunbeams like swords !
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed ;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far !

VI

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each leave his mate
To fly after the player ; then, what makes the crickets elate

Till for boldness they fight one another; and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse!
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey —"Bear, bear him along
"With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm-seeds not here
"To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
"Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!"—And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch

Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends?—Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a start
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang,—

IX

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigour! No spirit feels waste,
"Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
"Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
"The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
"Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
"And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.

"And the meal, the rich dates yellowed
over with gold dust divine,
"And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher,
the full draught of wine,
"And the sleep in the dried river-channel
where bulrushes tell
"That the water was wont to go warbling
so softly and well.
"How good is man's life, the mere living!
how fit to employ
"All the heart and the soul and the senses
for ever in joy!
"Hast thou loved the white locks of thy
father, whose sword thou didst guard
"When he trusted thee forth with the armies,
for glorious reward?
"Didst thou kiss the thin hands of thy
mother, held up as men sung
"The low song of the nearly departed, and
hear her faint tongue
"Joining in while it could to the witness,
'Let one more attest,
"'I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a
lifetime, and all was for best!'
"Then they sung thro' their tears in strong
triumph, not much, but the rest.
"And thy brothers, the help and the contest,
the working whence grew
"Such result as, from seething grape-
bundles, the spirit strained true:
"And the friends of thy boyhood—that boy-
hood of wonder and hope,
"Present promise and wealth of the future
beyond the eye's scope,—

"Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine:
"And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!
"On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like the throe
"That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour and lets the gold go)
"High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,—all
"Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!"

X

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say,
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I, and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung propped
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his name.
Have ye 'seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone

A year's snow bound about for a breast-
plate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunder-
ously down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive
yet, your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings
of ages untold:
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles,
each furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest
—all hail, there they are!
—Now again to be softened with verdure
again hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young
to the green on his crest
For their food in the ardours of summer.
One long shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then
sank and was stilled
At the King's self left standing before me,
released and aware.
What was gone, what remained? All to
traverse 'twixt hope and despair.
Death was past, life not come: so he waited.
Awhile his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes, left too
vacant, forthwith to remand
To their place what new objects should
enter: 't was Saul as before.
I looked up, dared gaze at those eyes, nor
was hurt any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye
watch from the shore,

At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—
a sun's slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence,
o'erlap and entwine
Base with base to knit strength more intensely : so, arm folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me)
what next should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him ? Song filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing
all that it yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the
beauty : beyond, on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to
brighten the eye,
Bring blood to the lip, and commend them
the cup they put by ?
He saith, "It is good ;" still he drinks not :
he lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own
part.

XII

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pasture,
when round me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled
slow as in sleep ;

And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the sky.
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be passed with my flocks,
"Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the rocks,
"Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
"Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know—
"Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that gains,
"And the prudence that keeps what men strive for!" And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII

"Yea, my King,"
I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring
"From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute:
"In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears fruit.
"Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem trembled first
"Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely outburst

"The fan-branches all round; and thou
mindest when these too, in turn
"Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed
perfect: yet more was to learn,
"E'en the good that comes in with the
palm-fruit. Our dates shall we slight,
"When their juice brings a cure for all
sorrow? or care for the plight
"Of the palm's self whose slow growth
produced them? Not so! stem and
branch
"Shall decay, nor be known in their place,
while the palm-wine shall staunch
"Every wound of man's spirit in winter.
I pour thee such wine.
"Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for!
the spirit be thine!
"By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome
thee, thou still shalt enjoy
"More indeed, than at first when, uncon-
scious, the life of a boy.
"Crush that life, and behold its wine run-
ning! Each deed thou hast done
"Dies, revives, goes to work in the world;
until e'en as the sun
"Looking down on the earth, though clouds
spoil him, though tempests efface,
"Can find nothing his own deed produced
not, must everywhere trace
"The results of his past summer-prime,—
so, each ray of thy will,
"Every flash of thy passion and prowess,
long over, shall thrill

"Thy whole people, the countless, with ardour, till they too give forth
"A like cheer to their sons: who in turn, fill the South and the North
"With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the past!
"But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last.
"As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her height,
"So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever take flight.
"No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine! Look forth o'er the years!
"Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the seer's!
"Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb—bid arise
"A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till, built to the skies,
"Let it mark where the great First King slumbers: whose fame would ye know?
"Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go
"In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so he did;
"With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—
"For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault to amend,
"In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall spend

"(See, in tablets 't is level before them) their
praise, and record
"With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,
—the statesman's great word
"Side by side with the poet's sweet com-
ment. The river 's a-wave
"With smooth paper-reeds grazing each
other when prophet-winds rave :
"So the pen gives unborn generations their
due and their part
"In thy being! Then, first of the mighty,
thank God that thou art!"

XIV

And behold while I sang . . but O Thou who
didst grant me, that day,
And, before it, not seldom has granted thy
help to essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my
shield and my sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant,
thy word was my word,—
Still help me, who then at the summit of
human endeavour
And scaling the highest, man's thought
could, gazed hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of heaven above me—till,
mighty to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance
—God's throne from man's grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my
voice to my heart
Which scarce dares believe in what marvels
last night I took part,

As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep!
And fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep,
For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves
Dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and, ever more strong,
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed.
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.

So sank he along by the tent-prop, still, stayed by the pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinised mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?
I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,

"I would add, to that life of the past, both
the future and this;
"I would give thee new life altogether, as
good, ages hence,
"As this moment,—had love but the war-
rent, love's heart to dispense!"

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp
more—no song more! outbroke—

XVII

"I have gone the whole round of creation:
I saw and I spoke;
"I, a work of God's hand for that purpose,
received in my brain
"And pronounced on the rest of his hand-
work—returned him again
"His creation's approval or censure: I
spoke as I saw,
"Reported, as man may of God's work—all
's love, yet all 's law.
"Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me.
Each faculty tasked
"To perceive him has gained an abyss,
where a dewdrop was asked.
"Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels
at Wisdom laid bare.
"Have I forethought? how purblind, how
blank, to the Infinite Care!
"Do I task any faculty highest, to image
success?
"I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no
more and no less,

"In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
"In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
"And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
"(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
"The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
"As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.
"Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,
"I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
"There 's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
"I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
"Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
"E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I durst!
"But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
"God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.
—"What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,
"Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?
"In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?

"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
"That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here the parts shift?
"Here, the creature surpass the creator,—the end, what began?
"Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
"And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
"Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
"To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
"Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
"Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
"And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest),
"These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
"Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
"This perfection,—succeed, with life's day-spring, death's minute of night:
"Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake,
"Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now, —and bid him awake
"From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
"Clear and safe in new light and new life, —a new harmony yet

"To be run and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure!
"The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure;
"By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
"And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this.

XVIII

"I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is I who receive:
"In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
"All 's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer,
"As I breathe out as this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
"From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread Sabaoth:
"*I* will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loth
"To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare
"Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my despair?
"This;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!
"See the King—I would help him, but cannot, the wishes fall through.
"Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
"To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,

"I know that my service is perfect. Oh,
speak through me now!
"Would I suffer for him that I love? So
wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
"So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffa-
blest, uttermost crown—
"And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor
leave up nor down
"One spot for the creature to stand in! It
is by no breath,
"Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation
joins issue with death!
"As thy love is discovered almighty, al-
mighty be proved
"Thy power, that exists with and for it, of
being beloved!
"He who did most, shall bear most; the
strongest shall stand the most weak.
"'T is the weakness in strength, that I cry
for! my flesh, that I seek
"In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O
Saul, it shall be
"A Face like my face that receives thee; a
Man like to me,
"Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever:
a Hand like this hand
"Shall throw open the gates of new life to
thee! See the Christ stand!"

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way
home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to
left and to right,

Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware :
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews ;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge : but I fainted not,
For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth ;
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills ;
In the shuddering forests' held breath ; in the sudden wind-thrills ;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still,
Though averted with wonder and dread ; in the birds stiff and chill
That rose heavily as I approached them, made stupid with awe :
E'en the serpent that slid away silent—he felt the new law.

The same stared in the white humid faces
upturned by the flowers ;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar
and moved the vine-bowers :
And the little brooks witnessing murmured,
persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices
—"E'en so, it is so!"

RABBI BEN EZRA.

I

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
"Youth shows but half; trust God: see all,
nor be afraid!"

II

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed "Which rose makes ours,
"Which lily leave and then as best recall!"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
"Mine be some figured flame which blends,
transcends them all!"

III

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,

Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

IV

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

V

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

VI

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

VII

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—

Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not
sink i' the scale.

VIII

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh hath soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want
play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone
way?

IX

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good
to live and learn?"

X

Not once beat "Praise be Thine!
"I see the whole design,
"I, who saw power, see now love perfect
too:
"Perfect I call Thy plan:
"Thanks that I was a man!
"Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what
Thou shalt do!"

XI

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest:
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

XII

Let us not always say
"Spite of this flesh to-day
"I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry "All good things
"Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

XIII

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

XIV

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone

Once more on my adventure brave and new :
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

XV

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby ;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold :
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame :
Young, all lay in dispute ; I shall know, being old.

XVI

For, note when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey :
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
"Take it and try its worth : here dies another day."

XVII

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
"That acquiesence vain :
"The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

XVIII

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

XIX

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor be afraid!

XX

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou call'st thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

XXI

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,

Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

XXII

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They, this thing, and I, that: whom shall my soul believe?

XXIII

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

XXIV

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account:
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

XXV

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped:
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

XXVI

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

XXVII

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

XXVIII

He fixed thee 'mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
"This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:

Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee, and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

XXIX

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

XXX

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's wheel?

XXXI

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men,
And since, not even while the world was worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

XXXII

So, take and use Thy work,
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

EPILOGUE.

First Speaker, *as David.*

I

On the first of the Feast of Feasts,
The Dedication Day,
When the Levites joined the Priests
At the Altar in robed array,
Gave signal to sound and say,—

II

When the thousands, rear and van,
Swarming with one accord,
Became as a single man,
(Look, gesture, thought and word,
In praising and thanking the Lord,—

III

When the singers lift up their voice,
And the trumpets made endeavour,
Sounding, "In God Rejoice!"
Saying, "In Him rejoice
"Whose mercy endureth for ever!"

IV

Then the Temple filled with a cloud,
Even the House of the Lord:
Porch bent and pillar bowed:
For the presence of the Lord,
In the glory of His cloud,
Had filled the House of the Lord.

SECOND SPEAKER, *as Renan.*

Gone now! All gone across the dark so far,
Sharpening fast, shuddering ever, shutting still,
Dwindling into the distance, dies that star
Which came, stood, opened once! We gazed our fill
With upturned faces on as real a Face
That, stooping from grave music and mild fire,
Took in our homage, made a visible place
Through many a depth of glory, gyre on gyre,
For the dim human tribute. Was this true?
Could man indeed avail, mere praise of his,
To help by rapture God's own rapture too,
Thrill with a heart's red tinge that pure pale bliss?
Why did it end? Who failed to beat the breast,
And shriek, and throw the arms protesting wide,

When a first shadow showed the star addressed
Itself to motion, and on either side
The rims contracted as the rays retired;
The music, like a fountain's sickening pulse,
Subsided on itself; awhile transpired
Some vestige of a Face no pangs convulse,
No prayers retard; then even this was gone,
Lost in the night at last: We, lone and left
Silent through centuries, ever and anon
Venture to probe again the vault bereft
Of all now save the lesser lights, a mist
Of multitudinous points, yet suns, men say—
And this leaps ruby, this lurks amethyst,
But where may hide what came and loved our clay?
How shall the sage detect in yon expanse
The star which chose to stoop and stay for us?
Unroll the records! Hailed ye such advance
Indeed, and did your hope evanish thus?
Watchers of twilight, is the worst averred?
We shall not look up, know ourselves are seen,
Speak, and be sure that we again are heard,
Acting or suffering, have the disk's serene
Reflect our life, absorb an earthly flame,
Nor doubt that, were mankind inert and numb,
Its core had never crimsoned all the same,

Nor, missing ours, its music fallen dumb?
Oh, dread succession to a dizzy post,
Sad sway of sceptre whose mere touch appals,
Ghastly dethronement, cursed by those the most
On whose repugnant brow the crown next falls!

THIRD SPEAKER.

I

Witless alike of will and way divine,
How heaven's high with earth's low should intertwine!
Friends, I have seen through your eyes: now use mine!

II

Take the least man of all mankind, as I;
Look at his head and heart, find how and why
He differs from his fellows utterly:

III

Then, like me, watch when nature by degrees
Grows alive round him, as in Arctic seas
(They said of old) the instinctive water flees

IV

Toward some elected point of central rock,
As though, for its sake only, roamed the flock
Of waves about the waste: awhile they mock

V

With radiance caught for the occasion,—
hues
Of blackest hell now, now such reds and
blues
As only heaven could fitly interfuse,—

VI

The mimic monarch of the whirlpool, king
O' the current for a minute : then they wring
Up by the roots and oversweep the thing,

VII

And hasten off, to play again elsewhere
The same part, choose another peak as bare,
They find and flatter, feast and finish there.

VIII

When you see what I tell you,—nature dance
About each man of us, retire, advance,
As though the pageant's end were to enhance

IX

His worth, and—once the life, his product,
gained—
Roll away elsewhere, keep the strife sus-
tained,
And show thus real, a thing the North but
feigned,—

X

When you acknowledge that one world
could do
All the diverse work, old yet ever new,
Divide us, each from other, me from you,—

XI

Why, where's the need of Temple, when the walls
O' the world are that? What use of swells and falls
From Levites' choir, Priests' cries, and trumpet-calls?

XII

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows!